CANALS IN LITERATURE 1760-1830

A thesis

submitted in partial fulfilment

of the requirements for the Degree

of

Master of Arts in English Literature

in the

University of Canterbury

by

J. L. Cornwall

University of Canterbury

1990

CONTENTS

I wish to thank Reg Berry for giving me support and encouragement while I have been working on this thesis; for helping me to find the right direction to take, and for believing I could get it finished. Bruce Cochrane, as Supervisor of Graduate Studies, was also supportive and very helpful to me during my time as a graduate student.

My work in this area has been helped along by the research done by Anthony Burton, Jon Raven, and Roy Palmer, whose books I have frequently referred to. I am also grateful to Martha Vicinus, who sent me a copy of one ballad which was very useful.

Derrick Ward, who sadly died earlier this year, did research for me in England, for which I am grateful.

Most of all, I appreciate the support and love I have always had from my parents, and the belief they had in me which has enabled me to continue working and finish this thesis since the death of my father, Barry Cornwall, on July 11, 1990. This thesis is dedicated to him, with all my love.

This thesis presents the results of an intensive study into literature of the years 1760-1830 to discover at what times and in what ways the building of England's narrow canal system, which occurred during these years, entered the writings of people at the time. All types of literature have been studied, from broadside ballads to promotional pamphlets to novels. Not all areas provided much material, but the absences were also of value in indicating which aspects of the canals were of interest to the general public, and which had limited interest.

The most common types of literature differed with each stage of the development of the canals. This study is divided into sections which reflect the stages a canal was at when it was being written about, and consequently the attitude of the writers, and the assumed attitudes of their intended audiences, reflect the interest the public had in canals at that stage. These stages are Promotion, Construction, The Opening, and The Canals in Use.

This study reveals that although the development of the canal system was a major factor in producing England's Industrial Revolution, surprisingly little notice was taken of it. The main group to be interested was the speculators, who invested their money and hoped to make a good profit; there were also some who saw the possibilities of canals and believed in them for their own sake, however most of the general public seemingly neither knew nor cared about artificial waterways. This is likely to be largely due to the class structure of England at the time; canals had strong connections with the working class and so were not popular with the nobility and upper-middle classes, who were the more literate members of society.

Any major event in modern society is inevitably seen and written about by a number of people. The literature (here defined as covering all forms of writing other than the purely technical) that is produced around an occurrence reflects and creates public interest in the subject. Thus we see reports of events in newspapers and magazines, we mention them in our letters to friends, people write books about them, and so on. The same happens with new inventions such as modern space craft or jet planes, the space shuttles or Concorde, for instance. These get advance publicity so that public interest will be aroused before they actually appear. Later the interest is fed by those who experience these new innovations and who write of their experiences, to friends, or for newspapers or magazines. Accidents, such as that which occurred with the Challenger, generate even more interest and all details are avidly sought after, and provided. Such events are given greater immediacy through the visual media; television feeds us information that we may not bother to read for ourselves. Even without television, however, news of these occurrences would travel, through the written word (the print media and also personal letters), because people want to know of such things, want to read about them and talk about them.

After a time interest in such events dies down. If the event which aroused interest is of a long-term nature, i.e., the invention and development of Concorde, then it will continue to crop up in literature but not as a focus of attention, rather it will be a means of developing setting or creating a atmosphere. It will have become a part of life for the writer, his or her characters, and the readers of the literature, something to mention in passing but not to be dwelt upon. From looking at the literature which mentions an event, it is possible to determine the interest that event had for various people, and to see what sort of impact it had on their lives and the lives of others.

This process of interest is present in the literature that surrounded a crucial development two hundred years ago. The years 1760 to 1830 are known, to those interested in the Industrial Revolution, or transportation, as the Canal Age. In those years thousands of miles of canals were built across England, linking place to place, inland towns to sea ports, rural areas to urban areas. The change canals brought to the countryside of England is immeasurable, nor only in terms of the impetus to economic growth which this communication network provided, but also in regard to the impact on the English landscape and the lives of those who lived there. The amount of interest in canals and their consequences, as well as the actual impact of them, can be discovered through examining various examples of the literature of the time.

There are a large number of different types of literature involved; some of these occurred only, or mainly, at specific times in the Canal Age, others were spread throughout the period. They are best arranged according to what aspect or part of the life of a canal they deal with, or what the attitude of the writer was and his or her intention in writing of canals, in other words, what interest the canals had for people at the time. This study divides the work into four sections which coincide with the current state of the canal written about. The seventy years are not divided into chronological sections, as an item written in the nineteenth century could belong to the first, or promotional section and, likewise, something written in the early days of the canals could belong to the later, established, period, if the writer's attitude is such that sees the canal as established. This is best illustrated by taking an hypothetical typical canal and looking at the literature that would have been associated with it. At this distance from the event, it is impossible to discover evidence of all types of literature connected with a single canal, most canals will have a selection of items from differing genres relating to them, and much of the literature, for example the ballads of the navigators, cannot be tied to any one particular canal.

The first stage, and the subject of the first section of this thesis, is the ***Promotional*** period. For the early canals this could be quite a long stage but later in the Canal Age it became more of a formality as less opposition was met. Once a group of people had come together and decided that they needed a canal in their area there was a lot of paperwork to be gone through before they could actually start building. The first job was to produce a pamphlet to let the public know of their intentions, and to convince possible opponents that a canal would be for the good of all. This was likely to be countered by another pamphlet by an opposing company, which would then lead to a pamphlet war with both sides trying to convince the readers of the truth of their statements.

There may also have been discreet items in publications such as the Gentleman's Magazine to announce the intention of the promoters. From quite early in the period people were writing and publishing lengthy books on the value of canals in order to promote specific projects or canal building generally. If the canal was being built later in the period, people who had already been won around to the idea of canals would mention a forthcoming project in any publications they may have been involved with. Someone might even write a poem or a ballad to celebrate the plan and the good it would do to the country. And it could happen that a novelist with an earlier interest in the subject might place a passage on the importance of canals in a novel.

After the process of promoting the canal was over, the ***Construction*** stage began. Not many people deliberately set out to write about this period of a canal, but if they were travelling through the country they might notice the gangs of navigators at work and mention it in their diaries or journals. Others who were travelling expressly to observe things and report on them to the public, would take a trip specifically to observe the building of a noteworthy section of canal. Progress reports were also printed in magazines for those who may have an interest in the canal. The major figures of canal building, the engineers and the original promoter, the Duke of Bridgewater, remained figures of interest and admiration throughout the period and beyond. They come into this section because their reputation derives from their roles in the actual building of the waterways.

There are many other people who were involved in the construction of a canal but they scarcely appear in the literature of the period. These are the navigators and other labourers who did the actual digging and constructing of the navigations. Although they did not often warrant a mention in the writings of observers, they had a literature of their own, some of which has survived and serves to provide details of their lives, of which very little is otherwise known. This literature consists of ballads and songs, which would have been sung either at work or at the public house in the evenings. The navigators also managed to create negative publicity for themselves, consisting of newspaper reports of riots they were involved in and other such disturbances.

Before the navigators left the canal at the finish of the construction work there was a ceremony they were sometimes involved in. This was the official ***Opening*** of the canal, an occasion usually accompanied by a considerable amount of pomp and ceremony, and perhaps even a specially composed song for the event. Once again there would be newspaper and magazine coverage as the canal had its big day. From then on most canals faded out of sight of the general public.

One canal inspired the composition of something more than the usual ditty made up for such occasions, but then this was not an ordinary canal. The Caledonian Canal was a massive project, built through the highlands of Scotland, joining loch to loch in order to provide a safer and quicker way for ships to get from one side of the country to the other. The skills required to build this canal were the same as used to build the smaller ones common in England by this time, but they were applied on a much larger scale. Robert Southey saw the canal being built and was impressed enough to compose his "Inscriptions on the Caledonian Canal " on the occasion of its completion. These lines, unlike so many which accompanied other canals at different

stages, are still around to be read and studied. This may be partly because they were carved in stone at points along the length of the canal.

Although the poem, like the canal, is more momentous than other efforts in England, it focuses on basically the same points as any other work on the building of a canal and illustrates how, after the canal was built, the people who did the actual building ceased to exist in the mind of the public. The "Inscriptions" provide a good example of public thought at the time, showing how people were concerned with opportunities for increased trade, with providing quicker and safer transport routes, and also illustrating the public taste for the "picturesque" which Southey shared and which is seen in his landscape descriptions in the poem.

Once a canal was in use it became an ***Established*** part of the countryside. So established was it in fact, that many travellers seemed not to notice the existence of it at all. Those who did were generally full of praise and only occasionally critical. But the main point about the material of this stage is that mention of canals is mostly incidental, as if canals had always been there, or simply ceased to be noticeable. Sometimes the canals drew attention when some unfortunate incident happened - the attention given to those working on the canals was nearly always negative - but it was an uncommon observer who took the time to notice them and the impact they had had on their surroundings.

Most of the material in this section consists of diaries, travel accounts, and letters, some written for publication and published immediately, others personal accounts which have been published more recently. In many of these the student is at the mercy of the editor and, depending on when the work was edited, material on canals could have been ruthlessly edited out as not of interest to the general public. Another source of material is historians of the time, who saw that canals themselves were part of history and traced their background. One novelist, Thomas Love Peacock, also was unusual among his contemporaries in noticing the existence of canals and mentioning them in his novels.

There should be one other group of material in this section; this is the collection of ballads and songs which were sung, if not written, by those who worked on the boats that moved goods along the canal. However, only one song has been found that definitely relates to this stage of the Canal Age, indicating the possibility of a number of lost, or at least unpublished, songs which may be lurking in collections in England and other countries. There appears to be growing interest in this field, however, so it is possible that more of these songs may come to light in the next few years.

These are the divisions which can be made in the life of a canal. Some canals gave rise to more literature than others, two which did arouse a lot of interest are the Bridgewater canal and the Trent and Mersey (then known as the Grand Trunk) canal. These are both early canals, engineered by James Brindley, and were remarkable mostly because in them the first of the engineering feats which canals were to inspire were built. The Bridgewater canal was the first totally artificial waterway to be built in England and would have provoked plenty of comment on that ground alone; to add to that, however, it contained the Barton aqueduct, built to carry the canal over the river Irwell. The Duke of Bridgewater, whose canal it was, and Brindley, his engineer, were both considered mad to try to carry a navigable waterway over a river. When the plan succeeded it attracted a great deal of attention from public:

> 'Tis not long since I viewed the artificial curiosities of London, and now have seen the natural wonders of the Peak; but none of them have given me so much pleasure as I now receive in surveying the Duke of Bridgewater's navigation in this county. His projector, the ingenious Mr Brindley, has indeed made such improvements in this way, as are truly astonishing. At Barton Bridge he has erected a navigable canal in the air; for it is as high as the tops of trees. Whilst I was surveying it with a mixture of wonder and delight, four barges passed me in the space of about three minutes, two of them being chained together, and dragged by two horses, who went on the terras of the canal, whereon, I must own, I durst hardly venture to walk, as I almost trembled to behold the large river Irwell underneath me, across which this navigation is carried by a bridge, which contains upon it the canal of water, with the barges in it, drawn by horses, which walk upon the battlements of this extraordinary bridge.[1]

But the canal not only attracted tourists, it had a number of other effects as well. It was 'the inspiration for an outburst of engineering activity such as Britain had not seen since the time of the Romans.'[2] It also acted as publicity for other canals, its success predicting success for all future efforts:

> So unbounded have the speculations in canals been, that neither hills nor dales, rocks nor mountains, could stop their progress, and whether the country afforded water to supply them,

> or mines and minerals to feed them with the tonnage, or whether it was populous of otherwise,all amounted to nothing, for in the end, they were all to be Bridgewater canals. His Grace's canal has operated upon the minds of canal speculators, much in the same manner as a large lottery prize does upon the minds of the inhabitants of a town.[3]

The Duke's canal was to prepare the path for later canals, aided in influencing the public mind by the success of the next major canal to be projected, the Grand Trunk canal, planned to connect the rivers Trent and Mersey.

The major attraction of the Grand Trunk canal was the digging of Harecastle Tunnel. No work on this scale had ever been undertaken before, and little was known of the types of rock and soil that would have to be dug through. There are accounts of people's trips to see the digging of the tunnel, to see the completed work, and some hardy souls even took trips through the completed tunnel. As a tourist attraction such a piece of construction was hard to beat at that time.

Interest in these projects died out eventually as more and more canals were built with aqueducts and tunnels (many of which are still standing and operational in the late twentieth century). Always, however, have the names of the Duke of Bridgewater and James Brindley inspired respect and admiration. Seldom could a traveller with an eye for a canal mention more than one or two canals without dedicating a page or two to praise of the two men who started the whole era and inspired a nation into a frenzy of canal building. Much of the material in these pages relates to either of these two canals, or to the two men who built the first canal.

NOTES

1 Anthony Burton, The Canal Builders (London: Eyre Methuen, 1972), pp. 3-4. Quoting Anon, A History of Inland Navigation (1779).

2 Burton, Canal Builders, p. 4.

3 Burton, Canal Builders, pp. 64-65. Quoting John Sutcliffe, A Treatise on Canals and Reservoirs (1816).

1. PAMPHLETS

The first stage of a canal is one in which literature has a vital place and the literature is, at this stage, more directly related to the canal than at any other time. This is because in order to gain the financial and other forms of support needed, it was necessary to publicize the project, and the only way to publicize at that time was to write something on the subject and publish it. Sometimes people who were not directly involved in a canal but who were supporters of canals in general saw a need to make their utility more widely known. From this distance in time, one cannot know the authors of the little promotional articles that appeared in publications like the Gentleman's Magazine. It may be that these were sent in by disinterested persons, but perhaps they were part of a thought-out publicity campaign for the canal involved. One wonders just how much interest the general public had in the progress of a canal unless they had shares in it; yet the number of progress reports and accounts of proposed canals indicates that there was a fairly wide audience for this information. Far-seeing landowners and manufacturers who saw possible advantages to themselves from canals would have helped provide this audience.

Canal literature of this period caters for all the different groups who may have an interest in canals. These groups, however, were not spread through society but came mostly from the middle and upper classes. These people, generally monied or with property, were literate and educated. The first priority was to attract their attention. It was one of the first tasks of the newly-organised canal company to write, publish, and distribute the pamphlet which was written to create interest in a specific canal. The first pamphlets also had to introduce people to a whole new concept in communications. It was not a task to be treated lightly as much rested on the effectiveness of the pamphlet in persuading people not only that they needed a canal, but that they needed a canal built on this particular route, and that they would be wise to invest money in the company planning to built it. This latter point needed less emphasis later in the Canal Age when speculators were only waiting for the opportunity to put their money into a canal project, but initially canals looked like an easy way to pour a lot of money into digging a ditch.

A pamphlet which is frequently quoted is the one written by Thomas Bentley (with the assistance of a few others) in 1765 for one of the earliest major canal projects, the Grand Trunk or Trent and Mersey canal. This canal was planned as a link between the ports of Liverpool and Hull, while passing through the Potteries and mid-Cheshire. Besides Bentley, those involved in promoting this canal included his friends Josiah Wedgewood, the potter, and Erasmus Darwin, Doctor and poet.

A great deal of time and effort went into producing this pamphlet. It was written and rewritten, and altered to make the canal sound more attractive; altogether it was a major exercise, the failure of which could have dire consequences for the proposed canal, as is indicated by the effect attributed to its success:

> At Worsley our pamphlet was greatly applauded, and the great turn in favour of canal navigation, was in a great measure attributed to its influence. I mean amongst the people who had not seen the Duke of Bridgewater's noble works.[1]

The effort that went into the writing of it is seen in references in the letters of Josiah Wedgewood to Bentley. There was an argument on the use of the word canal:

> To have a lawn terminated by a Canal &c. Why change a more elegant and equally simple word for a worse? Why a canal is as straight as a *Fleet Ditch.* — A Canal at the bottom of your meadow? Foh! it can't be borne by the Goddess of modern taste — but "*water*" ay *water*, give me *water* to terminate or divide my Lawn. This seems a real emendation — if you think so pray alter it accordingly, for I have the fear of the Goddess before my eyes.[2]

Wedgewood's advice was taken, and the full passage in the published pamphlet was as follows:

> Having considered the principal advantages which the public may reasonably expect from the execution of this design, we ought not to forget the pleasures that may arise from it to individuals, especially as taste is so universally cultivated, that our farms are gradually improving into gardens. And here it must be allowed, that to have a lawn terminated by water, with objects passing and repassing upon it, is a finishing of all others the most desirable. And if we add the amusements of a pleasure-boat that may enable us incessantly to change the prospect, imagination can scarcely conceive the charming variety of such a landscape. Verdant lawns, waving fields of grains, pleasant groves, sequestered woods, winding streams, regular canals to different towns, orchards whose trees are bending beneath their fruit, large towns and pleasant villages, will all

> together present to the eye a grateful intermixture of objects, and feast the fancy with ideas equal to the most romantic illusions.[3]

Although aware of the importance of phrasing the pamphlet to appeal to the upper and middle classes, Wedgewood understandably felt that it was a little unreasonable to have to be so concerned with the wording of it; he wrote to Bentley:

> Must the uniting of seas & distant counties depend upon the choice of a phrase or monosyllable? Away with such hypercriticism! & let the press go on. A pamphlet we must have, or our design will be defeated so make the best of the present & correct, refine and sublimate in the next edition.[4]

It would seem the pamphlet did not need much refining, for the reviewer in the Monthly Review remarked that it presented its information in 'the most perspicuous and intelligent manner' and found that the manner in which the subject is treated would render 'that attention agreeable' which the reader should pay to it.[5]

This passage from the pamphlet illustrates how the pamphlet writers aimed their effort at one of the groups to be convinced, the landholders on the proposed route of the canal. There are cases where, in order to ensure the aesthetic impact of the canal through an estate, it was deliberately given a bend so that it would wind gracefully through the lawn.[6] Landholders with an interest in the condition of their land and not just the look of it are also given a number of things to consider:

> They [canals] greatly promote the cultivation of poor and waster lands; either by bringing manure and conveying away the produce at a cheap rate; or by encouraging artists and manufacturers to settle upon their banks, in situations which were before uninhabited and unimproved.
>
> *Canals* do also, of themselves, directly tend to improve the lands through which they are carried, by taking away the superfluous moisture; and likewise *may be made* to furnish the farmer with the means of watering his meadows in seasons of unusual drought;

> either by spouts, which may be laid through the banks of the canals, or by large reservoirs, like those in *China*.. (p. 470)

Encouraging manufacturers to settle in an area also served to increase the value of the land, a point made by Bentley and likely to appeal to some landowners, if they approved of manufacturers (pp. 469-470).

The other main concern of landholders was the possible damage done by boatpeople poaching on their lands as they passed. This was also countered by Bentley:

> Nor must we here omit the trite objection of the *dishonesty* of *watermen*, that they will pilfer fruit and poultry in their passage. But certainly, this class of travellers may be ranked, in point of honesty, with the common carriers; and as one man and a boy, will be sufficient to attend the conveyance of twenty tons of goods along the canal, which by land would require the attendance of ten persons, the number of these dangerous visitors will be greatly decreased. (p. 472)

An increasingly powerful group whose support was required was the manufacturers. Many canals were built expressly to the advantage of them, such as the Trent and Mersey which goes through the Potteries of Stoke-on-Trent, and was largely promoted by the Potter, Josiah Wedgewood. The potters were clearly aware that:

> Those who can lay in their raw material, be furnished with plenty of food and fuel, and carry their goods to market at the least expence, can afford to sell them the lowest; and therefore may always have the preference, where they are not kept out by force: and it is plain that all these consequences do in a great measure depend upon *cheapness of carriage*; raw-materials, and food, and manufactures, being all affected by it. (p. 469)

But this does not mean that factory owners were always prepared to help finance a canal. They first had to be convinced that this particular canal was to their advantage, and at times they would insist on having canal access at their doors, a problem that was likely to be solved by a branch canal or arm leading to the factory.

A convincing example of such a situation is seen in Anthony Burton's novel, The Master Idol (1975). This novel is one of trilogy that covers the life of a man from a poverty-stricken childhood in a weaving village, through a period as a navigator and then contractor on canals, to running his own canal carrying business.

The Master Idol covers the period when canals were first being introduced into the area where it is set, and includes the attempts of a company to win the support of a major manufacturer whose factory is not actually on the proposed canal route.[7] The arguments used by the promoters of the canal in this novel give a good indication of the situation for both the parties involved. For, as the Industrial Revolution grew, manufacturers came up against the problem of arranging cheap and safe transportation for their goods:

> 'Modern trade can't grow if it takes you a week to shift a roll of cloth from your mill to the next parish. The thing is, I've travelled around, seeing how other folks manage things. The place I went that impressed me were the Duke of Bridgewater's Navigation, and a very amazing sight it is, gentlemen. Very amazing.'[8]

Canals were presented as a solution, they *'greatly diminish the price of carriage, and open easy communications between the distant parts of a country, and from each of those parts to the sea'* (Monthly Review, p. 469), but many people took some persuasion before they became convinced that they themselves would benefit. It is probable that the most telling argument to the manufacturers was the financial advantages of canal transport. The pamphlet writers were aware of this and would be sure to emphasise this 'cheapness'.

Other sections of the public at whom the pamphlet was aimed were those who had no direct interest in the canal itself, but who could be induced to support the building of it on the grounds that it would be to the good of the country itself. The support of these people was required in two ways as two things were necessary before the building of a canal could be started: an Act of Parliament and money. To get an Act of Parliament passed, especially in the early days before canals had proven their worth, was not easy. It was helpful to have a Patron in the House of Lords; the Duke of Bridgewater, for instance, stood as patron for the Grand Trunk canal, and other canals would seek the support of the local duke or earl.

It was still necessary to convince others who would have power when it came to passing the bill. This was done by emphasising in the pamphlet the amount of good that canals could do for England's

economy, agriculture, and employment. Every objection which opponents could raise seems to have been covered; many of these objections seem a little odd but presumably they were issues of concern at the time:

> It is another very great advantage of inland navigations, that they render the keeping of an immense number of *horses*, which are not employed in agriculture, unnecessary; and thereby prevent the destruction of vast quantities of food, which might be exported to foreign markets, or applied to the nourishment of more profitable animals, and the support of numerous useful and industrious families. (p. 472-473)

Another unusual objection which has been covered is concern for the training of young men for the navy:

> The only remaining objection that has occurred to us, is that by an inland navigation, between the ports of *Liverpool* and *Hull*, the *coasting trade*, that great nursery for seamen, will be diminished. To which it may be answered, that, in the first place, there is little or none of that trade between those two ports. Secondly, that as this inland navigation will give an opportunity for a more easy conveyance of the *products* of the interior parts of the country, to the neighbouring ports, which may from thence be conveyed, by sea, to distant parts of the kingdom, from whence other products, and commodities, may be returned; the coasting trade must hereby be greatly promoted. And lastly, as this navigation will contribute to increase the produce of our farms, will benefit our present manufactures, and occasion the establishment of new ones, it must, of course, enlarge the amount of our exports; and, instead of lessening, have a direct tendency to augment the quantity of our shipping, and the number of our seamen. (pp. 472-3)

This argument has its basis in patriotism, and perhaps fear, as the Seven Years War had only ended two years earlier in 1763, and the situation between France and England was not particularly stable at this time. In any war that did arise in the late eighteenth century, the navy would have an important part to play, and it was essential that it be kept up to strength..

An appeal was also made to those of a philanthropic mind. They were told that:

> *navigable canals* give employment to vast numbers of people; and where they go through *corn countries*, and in the neighbourhood of *collieries*, diffuse plenty of *food* universally about them; and furnish *fuel* for the use of the mechanic arts, and the comfort of the poor inhabitants; frequently at half the price they must otherwise have paid for it. (p. 470)

The Duke's canal is used as an example here, as he reduced the cost of coal in Manchester considerably, to the benefit of the poor.

The other outside group was the investors. For the first canals it was not easy to get enough people to buy shares in the canal company. Later, when the profits had started rolling in from the earlier canals, the difficulty was to avoid being swamped by speculators hoping to make a huge profit. Speculators were either a god-send or a major problem to canal companies. Samuel Cunliffe explains the problem when expressing his distaste of them in Anthony Burton's novel, The Master Idol:

> 'I do not like speculative capital. Money thoughtlessly given can, with equal thoughtlessness, be refused. When a man enters into an enterprise of this type, he takes on obligations, not only to supply the initial sums called for, but to answer subsequent calls for funds as the company shall require them, I gravely doubt, gentlemen, whether speculators are men of reliability in this matter. You may call, as the saying goes, but none need answer. No, such affairs should be conducted by men of business and financed by them for their value to the manufacturing community. Profits on shares are, of course, to be welcomed, but the main concern should be with the tangible benefits that the canal will bring.' (p. 233)

This distrust of speculators was expressed by others at the time of the canal mania in the 1790s. One person wrote to the Derby Mercury in November 1792, to give his views on a proposed canal:

> From the great eagerness that has lately been shown to obtain Subscription in Navigation Projects, of every kind, it may be concluded that the Subscriptions to be opened at Wichner will be speedily filled, not by Persons who seriously mean to promote the undertaking, but by Speculators, who propose to traffic in the Sale of Shares, before the application to Parliament.[9]

Not only was the existence of speculators well known, but the cause of their enthusiasm was also evident:

> So unbounded have the speculations in canals been, that neither hills nor dales, rocks nor mountains, could stop their progress, and whether the country afforded water to supply them, or mines and minerals to feed them with the tonnage, or whether it was populous or otherwise, all amounted to nothing, for in the end, they were all to be Bridgewater canals. His Grace's canal has operated upon the minds of canal speculators, much in the same manner as a large lottery prize does upon the minds of the inhabitants of a town.[10]

The end result, however, was likely to be more unfortunate for the canal company than for the speculators. The speculators lost their money if a canal wasn't completed, but the canal company was left with a half-built canal to be finished. In The Master Idol Cunliffe proved correct in his prophecies of the outcome of allowing speculators to buy shares. He sums up the situation the company is left in: 'Shares were, I believe, taken in large measure by speculators, Now, as I understand the matter, further calls for cash to these same shareholders have not produced the necessary funds. To be blunt, your canal is not finished, and you have not the funds for its completion' (p. 276).

The other side of the speculator problem was the temptation for people to set up a canal scheme simply to attract speculator's money. The writer of the letter to the Derby Mercury (above) is not merely commenting on speculators, he is warning them, and any honest investors who may be around, 'of the improbability of the above Scheme taking effect. If they will obstinately run into error after this caution, they will only have to repent, when too late, of their own folly and temerity.'[11]

All this discussion on the subject of speculators is an indication of how much interest in canals there was among the general public at the time. This interest was fed by a number of different items published about them. The next publication after the pamphlet was likely to be another pamphlet in opposition to the proposed canal. This would be distributed either by those with an alternative canal scheme to suggest, or by those who were opposed to the canal itself, because it would affect their livelihood, or for any of a number of reasons, which the original pamphlet writer would have tried to nullify first. This pamphlet would attempt to negate everything positive said in the first pamphlet. The pamphlet wars which followed resembled a modern political campaign, but ultimately, as the committee for the Grand Trunk canal found upon the publication of their pamphlet: 'the host of opposition sheets and pamphlets which followed upon its publication stimulated, rather than otherwise, public curiosity, and thus indirectly aided the more active exertions of the promoters of the canal.'[12]

The tradition of writing pamphlets in favour of or opposed to such schemes continued well into the railway era. At this time canal proprietors wrote opposing the building of railways near their canals. Tom Rolt's comments on one such pamphlet could be applied to many anti-canal pamphlets: 'The canal proprietors attacked this novel adversary by circulating tracts in which ridicule was blended with Awful Warnings designed to freeze the reader's marrow. . . . There are few objections, real or imaginary, which the anonymous author of this pamphlet has not thought up.'[13] This pamphlet presumably also had about as much effect as many of the anti-canal pamphlets, which were likewise written from fear of losing trade to a better supplier. It was not difficult to respond to these opposition pamphlets, as is seen from the following which Arthur Young, a supporter of canals, mentions when praising canals:

> In some of the controversial writings, published on the proposition of a navigation from *Hull* to *Liverpool*, the prejudiced, or rather the interested people, who were staunch friends to the *old* navigations, and, by the by, ridiculed *canals*, in a manner which must now, while such great success attends them, turn, I think, to their shame, among other arguments asserting the sufficiency of the navigation to *Liverpool* already existing; a stroke in one of their answerers is excellent:---"The delays and inconveniences render this (the old) navigation ineffectual for the conveyance of the produce *even* of the county of *Chester*; as far the most considerable part of the *cheese* produced in that

county is now carried *by land, parallel* with the *whole length* of this EXCELLENT navigation, to *Frodsham-bridge*, and *Bank-quay*; from which places it is conveyed by flats to *Liverpool*, there to be re-shipped for *London*, and other markets; and SALT, the other *staple* article of this county, is sent, in *great quantities*, all *by land carriage*, from *Northwich* to *Manchester*, for the supply of that town, and a very extensive and populous neighbourhood, notwithstanding the present *navigable communication* between those places."[14]

2. ARTICLES

After the pamphlets had created an interested public, the job was continued in magazines and other publications. The purpose was not always to gain investment; one letter in the Gentleman's Magazine seems designed to attract tourists, for example. However, it doesn't fail to point out the potential utility of the canal in progress:

Mr Urban,

As your magazine is a vehicle of things curious and entertaining, I hope you will not think the following article unworthy of publication in your next.

There is now carrying on in *Lancashire*, by the Duke of *Bridgewater*, a navigable canal to bring coals to *Manchester*, and other places, from the neighbourhood of Leigh; which, when finished, will be the most extraordinary thing in the kingdom, if not in *Europe*. The boats in some places are to go under ground, and in another place over a navigable river, without communicating with its waters; and there the canal is to be supported by great arches, now almost finished.

This is a true account, from

Yours, Etc, R. W.[15]

I cannot say who is responsible for this letter but it was unlikely to be anyone with anything to gain from the canal. It is possible that the writer was a Richard Whitworth who definitely had an interest in canals and whose writing on the subject are quoted in other works, such as Phillip's Inland Navigation (see pp. 13-14).

The letter makes no reference to financial matters but is concerned with the picturesque and practical aspects of the canal, these being issues of wider concern to the general public, not all of whom were preoccupied with finance.

Even without the aid of interested observers such as R. W., continuing publicity for canals was easy to arrange once they were popular. There was by now a public as eager to receive information as the companies were to impart it. Articles such as the one below did not directly feed the curiosity of the speculators but concentrated more on the function of canals as a means of public good. The reasons set out in this passage were, after all, the real reasons for building canals, even if they weren't those which motivated many of the promoters:

> The advantages arising from Canal Navigation, to manufactures, commerce, and agriculture, above those of Navigable Rivers, are universally acknowledged.
>
> There have been many courses for Navigable Canals pointed out in this kingdom that are practicable and eligible, but none from which greater advantages would arise to the public, and to the countries thro' which they pass, than that of a cut from Monkey Island to Reading, (tho' it is only part of greater design, mentioned in our Magazine for last month) for by means of this Canal the price of provisions will be greatly lessened in London, and the country supplied much cheaper with coals.[16]

Some readers, however, were more mercenary and probably took more notice of an announcement such as this: 'A subscription was opened for carrying Mr *Brindley's* plan into execution for making a navigable canal from *Birmingham* through the principal coal works, to join the *Worcestershire* and *Staffordshire* canals.'[17] Very blunt and to the point, it focuses on the two main draw-cards of canals at that time, i.e., Mr Brindley as engineer, and the potential coal trade. A project with these qualifications was likely to draw investors.

The style of these articles is variable, the main influencing factor being the intention of the writer. If he (for it is unlikely women would have written on this subject) is trying to attract attention, and money, to a particular project then he is likely to use more descriptive, lyrical language, combined with the presentation of such facts as will appeal to the speculator, such as prospective cargoes and potential profits.

Other writers were content to state merely the facts; indeed later in the period this was all that was necessary. All writers were absolutely convinced of the necessity of their project and its viability, no doubt as to means, ways, or profits was ever mentioned.

3. BOOKS

Other material of this period is remarkably similar to the pamphlets in both content and style. There are a number of books written by enthusiasts of canals, who hoped to infect their readers with their own enthusiasm. As book publication was also making the attempt to sell canals, although in general and not any particular one, it produced all the same arguments as the pamphlets. One writer, W. Tatham, experienced a similar anxiety over style as Josiah Wedgewood:

> 'Desirous, . . .to procure and communicate everything valuable on these subjects . . .it will be perceived, that I rather prefer extracts from reputable authors, than to intrude my own naked opinions, or obtain the name of a writer. And *a confidence in the purity of my own zealous endeavours to promote the common weal of mankind, combines with a consciousness of my imperfections, to give me assurance, that I have much indulgence to expect from men of superior talents and opportunity*; but I should be less pardonable, if I suffered this diffidence to suppress my own observation on places, or a more minute inquiry into things, which may, in some instances, have justified an opposite impression to others'[18] (my italics).

Writing a technical book at that time was clearly not regarded the same as it is now. Tatham shows that he believes that the quality of the subject should be reflected in the quality of the writing. His own writing, despite what he says about it, would not have disgraced his subject; this passage could have come from any of a number of reputable novelists of the time. Once again there is that unfailing confidence in the necessity of canals, and there is also an almost religious determination to do his best for them and, consequently, for mankind.

Other writers do not seem to have been as anxious about their style but were able to produce many pages of descriptions of canals. One such writer was John Phillips, whose Inland Navigation was first

published in 1792. An indication of the popularity of this book can be gathered from the fact that it went into a fifth edition in 1805. Charles Hadfield, in his introduction to the 1970 reprint of this edition, calls Phillips 'the first canal enthusiast'.[19] Phillips himself is clear about his reason for writing the book:

> Notwithstanding the great and obvious advantages which have been reaped from inland navigation in every country where it has been practicable by nature, or rendered so by art, prejudices still exist against it in the minds of many well meaning, though not well informed, persons. To bring to the more general knowledge of my countrymen the stupendous labours which have been undertaken and accomplished by other nations, and the advantages which have resulted from them, and to trace the rise, the progress, and the consequences of our own exertions in respect to inland navigation, are the principal purposes of this publication. (Preface, pp. iii-iv)

This is not the dry, technical language one might expect from a book on the subject of building canals, this is a book with a purpose but that purpose is not to bore the reader. The language is colourful and descriptive, particularly when Phillips is writing about the Bridgewater canal, the Duke of Bridgewater, or James Brindley. These are subjects which, throughout the canal age and beyond, inspired the writers of otherwise purely factual books to launch into eulogy, and to write lengthy passages of praise. The praise was for a number of things but first and foremost for the ingenuity which enabled the first canal to be built. Writers also admired what canals were doing for the county's economy, and for the finances of those who had been astute enough to invest in them. Because the aim of these books was always to promote the creation as well as the use of canals, the writer would not miss a chance to emphasise how well they repaid whatever was put into them:

> his grace,the Duke of Bridgewater, in whose praise it would be unpardonable to be silent, who, at an age too often spent in dissipation by our young nobility, applied his attention to useful objects, and had the spirit to hazard so great a part of his fortune in an undertaking worthy the pursuits of a prince, which, however, has ultimately proved *highly profitable* to himself and beneficial to his country. When the influence of exalted

> rank and large possessions are thus nobly and usefully exerted, they confer additional lustre on the possessors, who then justly merit being ranked among the first citizens of their country.
>
> His Grace had the honour as well as pleasure of having first introduced inland navigation into this kingdom; the utility of which is so sensibly known and felt, that it is at length, to the *profit and happiness* of this country, encouraged by the nobility and land owners in most of the interior parts of the country. It would also be unpardonable to with-hold the praise so justly due to the penetration of this illustrous nobleman, for having called forth the hidden talents of a Brindley; talents, which, but for his Grace, would have been lost to this country. (p. 38, my italics)

Phillips comments that 'such a theme can scarcely ever be exhausted, nor ought such a stupendous work to be treated merely as a common occurrence or undertaking' (p. 97). He evidently wishes to make quite sure that people really do appreciate the duke's canal and those who built it:

> Here grandeur, elegance, and economy are happily united. At first view it would seem that the work was intended to excite astonishment. But on a closer inspection there is to be found nothing unnecessary, and the whole has been finished at an expence no way adequate to the undertaking; In short, the work is truly admirable, and will be a standing monument of the public spirit and economy of the Duke of Bridgewater to the end of time. (p. 94)

Phillips also wants to ensure that the public realises what a great national work the Duke of Bridgewater did, and how it made him richer in the process.

This book contains a history of canals, an account of their use, and an explanation of their advantages. The advantages are, of course, many, and basically those which have been seen in the pamphlet we have already looked at. Phillips was fortunate in writing somewhat later in the Canal Age than Bentley, and he is able to refer to the presence of canals already built: 'So great has been the effect which these canals, and the trade to which they have given birth, have had on our industry, population, and resources, that in

many instances they have entirely changed the appearance of the counties through which they flow' (p. vii). Since the Victorian period many of the changes which canals brought have been frowned upon, but while the growth of industry did not do much for the causes of clean air and healthy living it did provide a means of living for many people who otherwise had little. And canals not only brought industry, they also brought cheap coal for heating, fertilisers for land, building materials and other essentials that were previously hard to obtain. Most of the changes to the appearance of the countryside which they brought were positive (this is discussed more fully in the section on the established period).

Phillips also quotes at length from a (rejected) proposal for a canal, written by 'Richard Whitworth, Esq, later Sir Richard, and then member for Stafford' (pp. 120-165). This was written in 1766, about the same time as Bentley's pamphlet, and thus contains a number of similarities and presents the same arguments in favour of the canal, e.g., cheapness, less breakage, advantages to surrounding countryside. In fact, Whitworth's familiarity with Bentley's pamphlet is indicated by the recurrence of many of the same points, including the training of boys for the navy:

> Every boy in each village through which the canals pass will have a desire to become a sailor, and will be trained up in his early youth to hand a rope, and soon become serviceable on board a ship, by which means these canals will become one of the most natural nurseries for seamen for his Majesty's fleets, and the protection of this island. (pp. 138-9)

Perhaps Whitworth was also hoping for support from those who disapproved of press gangs, and who preferred to see a more gentle way of recruiting sailors.

Whitworth has come up with one new point, obviously intended to pre-empt opposition from carriers. He proposed that canals should run no closer to trading or manufacturing towns than four miles, in order to avoid doing the carriers out of work (pp. 132-3). While this is a noble idea, it would probably mean a short life for the canal as the loading and unloading from cart to boat and back again would be likely to counter the economy canals could otherwise offer. A major advantage of canals over rivers for manufacturers was that they could load and unload directly from their warehouses as they were able to build on the banks of the canals.

One major difference between Whitworth's treatise and Bentley's pamphlet is that the former is not written on behalf of a company wishing to build a canal. Whitworth is strongly against canal companies and in favour of a different method of organisation:

> I cannot help thinking, and strongly recommending, that government should undertake a thing of such magnitude and material consequence to this nation, as the joining the three ports of Bristol, Liverpool, and Hull together by a navigable canal, as it ought to be executed in a noble manner, and not intrusted to the interested and narrow-minded notions of the upstarts of every little trading town, whose sole view will be their own good at the cost of others. (pp. 154-5)

Whitworth does not seem to have a high opinion of the middle-class, for it is at them that this statement is aimed. There may have been some specific reason for his distrust of those who made up canal companies, but it is possible that he is just expressing the view of his class, who felt threatened by the growing middle-class. As a member of parliament, he clearly felt that all power should reside in London. His suggestion of a government sponsored canal was not to be taken up until the Caledonian Canal was built in the early nineteenth century.

Phillips obviously had great admiration for this treatise, and this accounts for his quoting forty-five pages of it:

> The interest of the country and the public good are afterwards so judiciously discussed in this excellent treatise, and the manner as well as matter of the natural produce and manufactures so particularly and minutely treated, that I should leave this part lame and defective were I to omit the author's observation on this subject. (p. 120)

Once again, one sees the admiration these writers on a technical subject had for a well written piece of work.

Phillips also covers the proposal for the Trent and Mersey canal at length, referring to Bentley's pamphlet (pp. 105ff). He then goes on to cover all canals which have been proposed, giving details of the Acts of Parliament granted to them, and adding his own comments, as for instance on the Arundel canal,

where he says: 'Every exertion to render the inland navigation of this country more complete, deserves much praise; and there can be no doubt but the patriotic undertaker of this canal will not only benefit his own lands and estates, but receive the thanks of the neighbouring country, for so noble an exertion for their accommodation' (p. 273).

Phillips encounters difficulty when he comes to the acts obtained in the parliamentary session of 33 Geo. III (1793), a prolific year for canal acts. As he is trying to make his work readable and interesting he tries to vary the way he introduces the acts. After running through numerous acts with 'the act was also obtained in 33 Geo. III' and 'this is another act of the 33rd Geo. III', he moves on to say that 'the number of acts obtained in the session of 33 Geo. III. did not prevent another for this canal'. By the end of the year he is clearly running out of invention and finishes with 'this act was likewise obtained 33 Geo. III'. Phillips also appears to have encountered a certain amount of solicitors jargon, as he expresses relief when he come to one act without it: 'Here are no survey and re-surveys, nor a London solicitor's tautology, but the essence and quintessence of justice and economy, and not like one I am just going to abstract and insert, consisting of 127 clauses; but it must be considered that it is the production of London.' (p. 553).

Whether Phillips convinced anyone of the utility of inland navigation is unknown, but it is fairly certain that through this book he fed an interest already developed among the people of England in the subject of canals. He had clearly followed the progress of them from an early stage, and had the true enthusiast's admiration for Brindley and the Duke of Bridgewater.

As well as such works as Phillips Inland Navigation, The History of Inland Navigation (anon), and Tatham's History, there are other non-fiction books which spared some pages to promote canals. One such is Arthur Young's A Six Months Tour through the North of England. Travelling during the construction of the Duke's canal and after much of it was already completed, Young was struck with what he saw, and even more by what he learned of a proposed extension of the canal to Liverpool. In what he says on this subject one can find many of the arguments that were presented in favour of canals by Bentley. The first one is, of course, that: 'this canal will undoubtedly be the easiest, cheapest, and best way of sending goods of all kinds from and to *Liverpool* and *Manchester*.'[20] This point is repeated a number of times during the few pages Young devotes to the Duke and his canal.

Besides discussing the 'excellency and utility of the plan' (which are 'indisputable' (p. 238)) Young gives many words to the subject of the genius of Brindley and the Duke:

> when two such considerable trading and manufacturing towns as *Manchester* and *Liverpool* communicate, by means of this navigation, at a cheaper and easier rate than by the old one, there is no doubt but that his Grace will meet with that profitable return his noble spirit so truly deserves.
>
> This scheme is a vast one, and worthy so bold and daring a genius.
>
> (p. 238)

In fact, Young seems to be more interested in the people than the plan, and perhaps this was wise as the proposed extension did not eventuate.

4. NOVELS

One novelist whose work dealt in part with canal promoting was Henry Brooke. His novel The Fool of Quality was published in five volumes from 1766 to 1770 and was probably started before the Bridgewater Canal was built, or while it was underway. By the time the last volume was published, the Canal Age was well underway in England and so, while he is talking of what would need to be done to build a canal, Mr Meekly, the exponent of canals in the novel, is actually talking of what has been done. This is partially admitted in a footnote (whether by author or editor is unclear):

> It is observable that, within ten years subsequent to the period of the above promise, the inland navigation of England commenced. Since which time, the river Isis has been made navigable from Oxford to Cricklade in Wiltshire, and to Abingdon in Berkshire. The river Avon in Warwickshire, from Stratford to the Severn. The Avon, from Bath to Bristol. The Medway, from Maidstone in Kent to Tunbridge. The Lug in Herefordshire, to the Wey. The Lea, from Ware to the Thames. The river Kennet in Berkshire, to the Thames at Reading, containing twenty locks in seventeen miles. The river Are in Yorkshire, containing sixteen locks, whose tolls are now valued at about £10,000 yearly. Besides the Stroud, the Nen, and the Wey, with many others now in hand.[21]

However, this note mentions only rivers in listing inland navigations, whilst Mr Meekly talks definitely of canals in the text (for instance he tells how China 'cut and quartered this vast continent by as many navigable canals as answer to the ducts and veins in the human body' (p. 182)). It is likely that Brooke planned the events of the novel to take place prior to the canal age, this gave him the advantage in this section of not having to worry about keeping up to date with what canals were in existence or proposed. It also meant that he could suggest the opposition that would be shown against a canal and thus increase the nobility of Harry's character as he is willing to take on this opposition. Had the novel been set in the 1760s the presence of previous canals would have detracted from the struggle which Harry would have in trying to build the first canal.

At the same time, however, it seems that Brooke was paying a compliment to the Duke of Bridgewater in this section of the novel; the Duke's struggles and eventual success would surely have been known to Brooke, and were similar to those described as inevitable in The Fool of Quality. The similarity is also evident when one compares the way Brooke builds up the character of his noble 'fool' throughout the novel, with these descriptions of the Duke by two of his contemporaries, the reviewer of the pamphlet for the Grand Trunk canal, and Arthur Young:

> Happy would it be for this nation, if men of fortune and influence, instead of wasting their wealth and misapplying their talents in election-squabbles and party broils, would turn their thoughts to such national objects, and entertain a generous emulation who should best promote the interest of their country! That the trading interest of this kingdom cannot be more effectually improved than by means of inland navigation, is evident from the noble experiment made by his grace the *Duke of Bridgewater*, which has been attended with such beneficial effects to that part of the country.[22]

> Upon the whole, the uncommon spirit which actuated his Grace the Duke of *Bridgewater* in designing and executing such noble works, can never be sufficiently admired: at an age when most men aim only at pleasure and dissipation, to see him engaged in undertakings, that give employment and bread to thousands; that tend to greatly advance the agriculture, manufactures, and commerce, of an extensive

> neighbourhood; in a word, that improve and adorn his country, is a sight so very uncommon, and so great, that it must command our admiration.[23]

In The Fool of Quality, the Earl is so fired by what Mr Meekly says on canals that he volunteers Harry to set them in motion:

> I protest, cried the earl, were I young, I would to-morrow morning, at my own cost, set about this work of national, or rather of universal, beneficence, but my Harry here has youth enough, with an abundance of benevolence also for the purpose; and I recommend it to him as the greatest of charities, a charity to Great Britain, a charity to mankind. - What would you think, my lord, said Harry, of my expending your whole drawer of gold upon this business? Great as it is, it would be but a small matter toward the value of purchasing peace upon earth, and the sons of peace upon earth will be likeliest to be the sons of love in heaven. So that we cannot lay out our money to better advantage in any purchase for the benefit of the brothers of our own frailty. (pp. 185-6)

Just as this would be the ultimate act of the 'fool of quality', so has the Duke in building his canal made himself appear what many people of the time probably considered to be (before the profits from the canal started rolling in) a 'fool of quality'.

It is clear that Henry Brooke was an enthusiast on the the subject of canals. The only thing that he is known to have had to do with them is the writing of a pamphlet on the subject on 'Inland Navigation in Ireland'.[24] Presumably he developed more of an interest in the subject through this and used the novel as an opportunity to air his views. His enthusiasm is rare to find in the 1760s and Brooke must either have been a much-travelled or much-read man to present the information he does. Biographical evidence indicates that he travelled only in England and Ireland, so his information was probably gained from books, and likely to be the result of research done for the Irish pamphlet.

The Fool of Quality attracted considerable attention[25] and so presumably readers of the day were able to accept his enthusiasm more easily than we can today, although of course it was probably not the discourse on canals which drew attention. The last volume, in which these pages appear, is also considered

not to be up to the standard of the rest of the book. The insertion of this passage may be a sign of Brooke losing track of exactly what he was doing in the novel, although Charles Kingsley did not think so when he wrote his "Biographical Preface" to the 1859 edition:

> The fifth volume . . . is certainly inferior to the rest, and without seeing in it, as some have done, only " the magnificent ruins of genius," one may judge from it that his noble intellect was failing rapidly, even before that loss of his wife which gave the death blow alike to heart and brain. Nevertheless, even in it are deep and beautiful thoughts, on theology and political economy; and in his decadence, Henry Brooke is still in advance of his age, preaching truths which are now accepted by most educated Englishmen,and other truths which will be accepted by them ere long. (pp. xlvi-xlvii)

The advantages of canals may well have been one of the truths which Kingsley was referring to.

This discourse can be considered separately from the rest of the novel as it is not related to the events of it in any way. Nor does it bear much connection to the character who talks on the subject; he has shown no previous interest in canals and seems to have merely been available when Brooke wanted to mention canals. It is indeed possible to consider these pages as though they were a pamphlet themselves, for they contain the same biased information as is seen in pro-canal pamphlets and books, have the same educative tone, and point out the same advantages:

> Now, in Great Britain and Ireland, and in all continents or inland countries, the several deserts, mountains, marshes, and other obstacles, with the difficulty, danger, and toil of travel, and the great expense of land carriage, have utterly precluded all commerce and communication to any considerable extent. Insomuch that it would be *easier* and *cheaper* to convey a commodity of any burden to either of the Indies, than from many parts of Great Britain and Ireland to others, by land. (Vol. 2, p. 181, my italics).

Although the reference to the ease and economy of transport is not applied to canals at this stage, these are still the key words of the canal pamphlet.

This passage is just the introduction to the 'pamphlet' presented by Mr Meekly in the novel. It continues for another five pages and relies on two main arguments for its impact. The first of these is the improvements that could be made to the country by introducing inland navigations. Meekly cites the examples of Holland and China to illustrate this point and compares the state of these countries favourably with Britain and Ireland:

> Now, throughout China and Holland, no person is in want, because all are hired,all employed, the young and the old, the lame and the blind; and all find a ready sale, without anxiety of loss of time, without travel or delay, for products of their industry. Throughout Great Britain, on the contrary, nineteen in twenty are in real want; and in Ireland, as I am told, forty-nine in fifty are nearly in a state of beggary, merely for want of being employed - for want of encouragement to labour. (Vol. 2, p. 180).

The reason why these countries are in such an enviable state is that they, 'are the only countries upon earth who have considerably availed themselves of this capital benefit of water carriage, or water commerce; and therefore they are, incomparably, the most populous and most prosperous of all countries in the world' (Vol. 2, p. 182). Meekly uses the metaphor of canals being similar to the veins of the human body and describes how a network of them across a country takes the necessities of life from place to place, from supply to demand, so that everyone is provided with all they need to live, and live adequately and not in the miserable state of many in Britain and Ireland (Vol. 2, pp. 182-3). This has the effect of showing canals to be essential to the life of a country, necessary to prevent parts of the country becoming atrophied and dying through lack of vital supplies.

It is undoubtedly the case that many people in England were cut off from many of the items important to survival and were living in extreme poverty, but it may not be so true that everyone in canal-served countries, such as China and Holland, was 'employed, active, industrious, ingenious, and thriving' (Vol. 2, pp. 182-3). Meekly presents a very positive view of the effects of the canals and one suspects that while Brooke has researched the benefits of canals well and given the benefit of his research to Meekly, one of them may be getting a little carried away in imagining the practical effects:

> half the number of hands that perish through war and want, might be peacefully and plentifully employed in accomplishing this weal of mankind. Famine and depredation would then cease. Nation would no longer rise up against nation, nor man against man. The earth, by culture, would soon become capable of sustaining tenfold the number of its present inhabitants. We should no more be tempted to push each other from existence. We should find ourselves mutually interested in preserving and multiplying the lives of all from whose labours we were to derive such advantages. All would be plenty, all peace and benevolence throughout the globe. (p. 184)

Although canals are going to improve the way of life for all, Meekly's view is a capitalist one. The workers are clearly not part of this argument, they are simply affected as a consequence. They are referred to as 'hands', thus indicating their value to society as means of production. Later in the passage this point is made explicitly as 'we' will derive advantages from the 'labours' of others, whose sole reason for existence is to benefit those better off. Harry has been taught that it is up to him, as a member of the upper class of society, to provide a better life for those in the working class. Now we discover that it is up to the working class to provide a better life for the middle class, and the only reason that the lot of the working class is to be improved is so that they can work harder.

Connected to this basic premise, not unusual in the eighteenth century, is Meekly's next argument which is designed to appeal to those whose minds are on higher things than comfort on earth:

> From what has been premised, my lord, it is most evident that industry is the parent of the wealth of this world. That no man's industry is sufficient to his own occasions. That the mutual assistance denominated commerce is, therefore, necessary to the well-being of all people. That the reciprocal advantage of this commerce consists in supplying mutual wants with mutual redundancies. That this commerce, however, cannot be carried on without a medium for the conveyance of such supplies. That such a medium by land, even where it is practicable, is tedious, toilsome, expensive, extremely discouraging, and cannot be pushed to any considerable extent or effect. *That God, however, hath opened for the purpose an easy, speedy, and universal medium of seas, lakes, and rivers,*

> *part of which he hath left unnavigable, that man might finish by art what nature had prepared, and contribute in some degree to his own advantages.* That, accordingly, China and Holland (and France of late) have pursued the path so *divinely appointed,* and that power, wealth, and prosperity have flowed in upon them, in proportion as they have opened the medium of water-carriage for their reception. (Vol. 2, pp. 183-4, my italics).

Hence, not only will the provision of inland waterways have a remarkable effect on the economy of England, but it is also only doing work set out for us by God and therefore the duty of all good Christians. This is an argument which could have been, and possibly was, used to support all industry at this time. Change was necessary for improvement, even if the change itself may not seem to be an improvement at the time. Factories were built and machines installed because in this way the manufacturer could produce more items and supply more people. Those who had to work in the factories may not have been any better off, but it was their job to help make things better for others. Machines were invented and therefore should be used and improved. Old methods of transport were ineffective and so new ones should be tried. Canals were probably the only improvement at the time that required a sacrifice from the wealthy as well as the poor and perhaps that is why this point is being made here, so the landowners could see what good the loss of their land could do to the economy and to all the people of England. The argument is stronger than this; it is a duty to promote canals as it is a duty to always improve things when possible so that the condition of people will improve and they will be raised closer to God. (William Cobbett did not agree with this, for he believed that canals made the condition of the people worse as they drew all produce towards the cities and left the countryside poorer than ever. This is discussed in the section on Canals in Use).

Meekly then continues to explain why no one has built canals already when they would obviously be so beneficial. This is the part which may be referring to the Duke of Bridgewater as Meekly talks of all the problems one would encounter in a private endeavour to build a canal and why most people would be deterred. The main reason it has not been done, according to Meekly, is that those with the money to do it would only do so if they could 'be assured of engrossing to himself the most considerable part of the profits that would thereby accrue to the public': 'For, such is the nature of unregenerate man, that he grudges to others any portion of those goods which he so eagerly craves and grapples after himself.' (Vol. 2, p. 185).

Even someone who was willing to build without concern for profit would be likely to find it an impossible task:

> Though you were master of half the wealth of the people of England, and were willing to employ the whole for their emolument in this way, the people themselves would oppose you in every step you should take. Some would be too proud to accept a benefit from you. Others would tell you that no man should dare to violate their property with either spade or pickaxe; and others would indict you even for treading on their grounds. Nothing less than the act of the whole legislature, to whom the people have committed their confluent powers, can avail for an undertaking of such national import. (Vol. 2, p. 186)

This is a fairly accurate description of the opposition that was put forward against the building of canals. The Bridgewater canal ran into these problems first and broke the ground for the proposers of other navigations, but there were always landowners who did not want waterways on their land. This was a problem which was only solved by act of parliament, giving the canal committee purchasing power, although the owners were able to negotiate the price and some other details, and could still prove very awkward if they were so inclined, as was often the case. These problems can be seen in The Master Idol, and Sir Robert's comment was probably typical of many at the time:

> Do you know the wretched fellow wants to build some canal or other through our lands, and burbles on about compensation and purchase. What do you imagine he thinks he's talking about? Does he suppose that land is to be bought as he buys his cotton? I cannot believe there could be compensation enough for allowing an unpleasantly dirty ditch through the land, with even more unpleasant and dirty fellows to travel upon it. (p. 290)

5. BALLADS

The promotion of canals was not restricted to prose. Poets and ballad writers also expressed themselves in favour of them. One of the earliest to do so was the writer of the ballad, "Inland Navigation", which was printed in the Gentleman's Magazine in March 1766:

'Twas just at the time when in sorrowful strain,
Old England was grievously groaning,
Her natives in sadness, to add to the scene,
The loss of their trade were bemoaning:
To give some redress, in this age of distress,
Some worthies (tho' few in the nation)
As a scheme that might tend, to some favourable end,
Were resolved to promote navigation.

In Lancashire view what a laudable plan,
And brought into fine execution
By Bridgewater's duke; let us copy the man,
And stand to a good resolution:
If the waters of Trent with the Mersey have vent,
What mortal can have an objection!
So they do not proceed, to cut into the Tweed,
With the Scots to have greater connection.

A free intercourse with our principal ports,
For trade must be certainly better;
When traffic's extended, and goods easy vended,
In consequence things will be cheaper:
Our commerce must thrive, and the arts will revive,
Which are now in a sad situation;
If we follow this notion, from ocean to ocean,
To have a compleat navigation.

To the land what advantages soon must proceed,
When once we have opened our sluices?
Our cattle, and even the land where they feed,
Will be turn'd into far better uses:
'Tis this will enable our Merchants abroad
To vie with each neighbouring nation:
Who now, as they tell us, in fact undersell us
For want of this free navigation.[26]

The resemblance to the pamphlet is obvious. Cheapness and ease of transport are mentioned, the effect on commerce referred to and even the reduced need for horses predicted by Bentley is included.

The ballad has a slightly lighter tone than the pamphlets, although perhaps the reference to avoiding a connection with Scotland was not a joke considering it was only nineteen years since the Rebellion had been quelled at Culloden. War had disrupted England's economy and this is reflected throughout the ballad, which is also designed to stir up patriotism amongst the readers and drive them into a canal-building frenzy. Anthony Burton comments that this poem reflects the mood of the people in England after they had seen the success of the Bridgewater Canal:

> 'The light hearted optimism, the appeal to patriotism, even the rather snide references to the Scots . . . were all typical of the period. But the keynote is the feeling that the expansion of canals brought a promise of an almost unlimited expansion of trade'.[27]

"Inland Navigation" is in favour of canals generally, Another ballad of the time is about one specific canal. This "Song, on obtaining the Birmingham and Worcester Canal Bill" is something more than just what its title indicates. Like the other promotional material, most of the ballad is predicting the great and positive changes that the canal will make to the nation:

Come now begin delving, the Bill is obtain'd,
The contest was hard, but a conquest is gain'd;
Let noe[sic] time be lost, and to get business done,
Set thousands to work, that will work down the sun.

With speed the desirable work to compleat,

The hope how alluring - the spirit how great!

By Severn we soon, I've no doubt on my mind,

With old father Thames shall an intercourse find.

By int'rested motives tho' people are led,

With many the ground who the fancy may tread;

'Twill prejudice stifle, and malice strike dumb,

When the seat of the Arts shall a sea-port become.

Redditch, where the sons of the Needle reside,

Who commerce revere, and make friendship their pride,

The prospect enraptures - and Bromsgrove no less,

Has cause at the victory joy to express.

In Europe's grand Toy-Shop how pleasing it will be,

Well freighted with trows, and the barges to see;

The country 'twill charm, and new life give to trade,

When the seat of the Arts shall a sea-port be made.

With pearmains and pippins 'twill gladden the throng

Full loaded the boats to see floating along;

And fruit that is fine, and good hops for our ale,

Like *Wednesbury* pit-coal will always find sale.

So much does the rage for Canals seem to grow,
That vessels accustom'd to Bristol to go;
Will soon be deserting Sabrina's fair tide,
For shallows and shoals sailors wish to avoid.

As freedom I prize, and my country respect,
I trust not a soul to my toast will object;
'Success to the PLOUGH, not forgetting the SPADE,
Health, plenty, and peace, Navigation and Trade'.[28]

Like many songs related to canals, this one centers on Birmingham, a city soon to have a vast network of waterways and soon to thrive as a large industrial centre. Canals were a vital impetus to that growth, providing the essential communication with other markets and ports. Coming at the end of the promotional period as this ballad does, it is able to look back upon the hard work of getting support and a Bill, and look forward to the actual construction of the canal and the glories it will bring. The forecast for the future of canals is, as often in the period, very rosy.

Even late in the nineteenth century canals were being promoted, although they were likely to be ship canals. The Manchester Ship canal was actually opened in 1894 but this song relates to an earlier proposal for it, of uncertain date:

I sing a theme deserving praise, a theme of great renown, sir;
The Ship Canal in Manchester, that rich and trading town, sir;
I mean to say it once was rich, e'er these bad times come on, sir;
But good times will come back, you know, when these bad times are gone, sir.

In eighteen twenty five, when we were speculating all, sir,
We wise folk clubbed together, and we made this Ship Canal, sir;
I should have said we meant to do, for we'd the scheme laid down, sir;
That would have made this Manchester a first-rate sea-port town, sir.

Near Oxford Road the dry dock is, to cork and to careen, sir;
Our chief West India Dock is where the pond was at Ardwick Green, sir;
That is to say they might have been there, had these plans been done, sir,
And vessels might have anchored there of full five hundred tons, sir.

Instead of lazy Old Quay flats, that crawl three miles an hour, sir,
We'd fine three masted steamships, some of ninety horses power, sir;
That is, had it been made we should; and Lord! how fine t'would be, sir,
When all beyond St. Peter's Church was open to the sea, sir.

At Stretford, Prestwich, Eccles too, no weaver could you see, sir,
His shuttle for a handspike changed, away to sea went he, sir;
I'm wrong, I mean he would have done so had it but been made sir,
For who would starve at weaving who could find a better trade, sir?

Alas then for poor old Cannon-street, the hookers-in, poor odd fish!
Instead of catching customers, must take to catching cod fish;
That is, supposing it was made, may it ne'er be I wish, sir,
These cotton baits of customers, would never do for fish, sir.

Alas! too, for poor Liverpool, she'd surely go to pot, sir,
For want of trade her folks would starve, her custom-house would rot, sir,
I'm wrong they'd not exactly starve of want, for it is true, sir,
They might come down to Manchester; we'd find them work to do, sir.

Success then unto Manchester, and joking all aside, sir,
Her trade will flourish as before, and be her country's pride, sir;
That is to say if speculation can be but kept down, sir,
And sure we've had enough of that, at least within this town, sir.[29]

Once again the song prophecies riches to come to the town if a canal is built, or, in this case, the riches that would have come if the canal had been built. The enthusiasm for canals behind these songs is most noticeable; one would never hear such celebrations today at news of a proposed motorway. This was due to the isolation of many areas before the arrival of canals; it could take days or weeks to transport people or their goods across country. Canals put an end to that, providing the first economical and reliable transport service in England.

The best advertisement for canals was obviously the successful operation of other canals. But in different ways the varying types of literature mentioned in this section did their part to promote canals. None did so much as the pamphlets, which generated the initial interest in a particular project. If the pamphlet did not do its job then none of the following material would have appeared as there would have been no public for it, nor would there have been the money to take the project further.

Once the canal age was under way a number of literate, if not previously literary, people began to use their skills to expound the advantages of canals, having seen from the first few what these were. They wrote about canals in books, in magazine articles, in their travel accounts, and some wrote poems or songs about them. All these served to keep alive an interest in building more canals to serve more areas of the country. What negative publicity there was for canals at this stage came from groups who stood to lose financially through them, for example, the carriers, and owners of river navigations. But even they often helped promote for any publicity is good publicity when the main intention is to attract the attention of the public. The more people who were writing about this new innovation, the more people who were reading about it.

Once the construction of a canal began, many more people began to write about it, and their opinions were not always favourable, although they sometimes had good reason to sound a note of caution. The interest that had been created in the promotion period was now to be fed by accounts of the construction, the engineers, and those anonymous beings who did the dirty work, the navigators.

1 Eliza Meteyard, The Life and Works of Josiah Wedgewood (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1865-6), I, p, 351.

2 Meteyard, Josiah Wedgewood, I, p. 414.

3 Anthony Burton, The Canal Builders (London: Eyre Methuen, 1971), p. 47. From Phillips, Inland Navigation, quoting Bentley's pamphlet for the Trent and Mersey canal.

4 Meteyard, Josiah Wedgewood, I, p. 414.

5 "A View of the Advantages of Inland Navigations" reviewed in the Monthly Review, 33, (Dec. 1765), pp. 468-73. All further references to this pamphlet are from this source.

6 'the Canal . . . a most fortunate embellishment to the neat seat of Mr *Lister* of *Hermitage*. The proprietors (with the respect they usually pay to gentlemen) have before this house given it an elegant form'. Thomas Pennant, Esq., The Journey from Chester to London (London: Wilkie and Robinson, et al, 1811), pp. 25-6.

7 Anthony Burton, The Master Idol, (London: Macdonald and Janes, 1975)

8 Burton, The Master Idol, p. 231

9 Quoted in Burton, The Canal Builders, p. 64.

10 Burton, The Canal Builders, pp. 64-65. Quoting John Sutcliffe, A Treatise on Canals and Reservoirs (1816).

11 Burton, The Canal Builders, p. 64.

12 Meteyard, p. 346.

13 L. T. C. Rolt, Thomas Telford (London; New York: Longmans, Green, 1958) ,p. 155.

14 Arthur Young, A Six Months Tour through the North of England (London: W. Strahan, etc, 1771), pp. 239-240.

15 Gentleman's Magazine, 30, (1760), p. 623. (Hereafter cited as GM.)

16 "Advantages of Canal Navigation", GM, 41, (Feb. 1771), p. 56.

17 "Historical Chronicle", GM, 37, (June 1767), p. 328.

18 W.Tatham, The Political Economy of Inland Navigation, Irrigation, and Drainage (London: Robert Faulder, 1799), p. 85.

19 John Phillips, Phillips' Inland Navigation: a reprint of A General History of Inland navigation, Foreign and Domestic; containing a Complete Account of the Canals already executed in England with Considerations on those Proposed edited and with an introduction by Charles Hadfield (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1970) from the fifth ed, (1805), Introduction.

20 Young, Six Month's Tour, p. 237.

21 Henry Brooke, The Fool of Quality, "Biographical Preface" by Charles Kingsley, (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1859), p. 186. This edition is used for all references to this novel.

22 Monthly Review, 33, p. 468.

23 Young, Six Months Tour, p. 240.

24 Dictionary of National Bibliography, eds: Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee. Vol II (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1908), p. 1334.

25 The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English, Ed: Ian Ousby (London: Guild Publishing, 1988), p. 128.

26 Burton, The Canal Builders, pp. 24-5. Quoting "Inland Navigation", GM, 36 (March 1766).

27 Burton, The Canal Builders, p. 25.

28 From Aris's Birmingham Gazette, 1st August, 1791. In Roy Palmer, ed, A Ballad History of England from 1588 to the present Day (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd, 1979), pp. 74-75.

29 Jon Raven, Canal Songs, (Wolverhampton: Broadside Records, 1974), p. 12. Sung by Mr Hammond at the Theatre Royal, Manchester. From Notes and Queries, March 12, 1881, Manchester Reference Library.

Once the canal promoters had done their work and the Bill was obtained, it was time for the hard work of building the canal to begin. The literature that relates to this stage of canal development can be divided into two main sections. The first consists of items written by people who were not directly connected with the construction of the canal, but who, for some reason, took an interest in it. The subjects they wrote about can be divided into groups: the navigators who did the actual digging; those who organised and designed the canals, i.e., the engineers and the Duke of Bridgewater; and the actual construction of the canal itself and the effect the finished canal was likely to have on the area surrounding it. This last could be divided into two groups but the same passages tend to be involved in both so they are included together. The second section consists of material from the inside, from the navigators and engineers who did the work, and gives their views of what they were doing and the life they were leading.

1. OUTSIDERS AND TOURISTS

Public interest in the actual construction of canals varied from incidental to intense. From the writings of people in their diaries or journals, we are able to learn whether canals were an outside event that occasionally intruded upon them, or an attraction that they made the effort to visit. For most of the public canals simply weren't there at all. For this reason there appears to be no mention of canal construction in fiction of the period. For the difficulty in finding references in journals and diaries, some of the blame should perhaps go to the publishers and editors of today, who have not issued many of the works that were once available and which are now out of reach for the research student without access to the British Library or a similar source. Fortunately, some of these works are well covered in books by those who do have access to them and today's reader can glean some idea of the public reaction to the building of canals by reading such books as Anthony Burton's The Canal Builders. Editors may also be responsible for omitting references to canals when editing some, admittedly lengthy, journals.

i. Navigators

One person upon whose life canals once intruded was Elizabeth Fremantle, nee Wynne. Her only recorded encounter with the inland waterways was not positive, although only third-hand:

1799

21st MAY. TUESDAY. Fremantle was sent for on account of a riot having taken place at Dreyton occasioned by the people of the canal. Twenty-six of them were taken and are to be sent to Aylesbury jail tomorrow. Our Magistrate was delighted in having this opportunity of showing his *great skill* — Burne's justice is never out of his hands.[1]

Fremantle, Elizabeth's husband, was a commander in the navy and was later to fight at Trafalgar with Nelson; he was no doubt well used to quelling disruptions among his men and seems to have dealt adequately with this riot. This sems to have been the only contact the Fremantles had with canals, although there was clearly a canal in their neighbourhood. There is no evidence of them ever visiting it or travelling by it. Perhaps disturbances of the peace were the only things which drew the attention of the upper classes to the navigations.

Riots were reported in newspapers and the rest of England was warned of what to expect when a canal was begun in their area. As an example of the feeling about navigators from the start, one writer, who seems to doubt the veracity of most media reports of riots, makes an exception:

> the unquietitude of the populace, from an idea of scarcity, is far less than where riots have been set forth by the news-writers, in some places most erroneously, the disturbance at Barrow on Soar excepted, which has indeed been productive of the most fatal consequences; but this, it should be recollected, was among that newly-created, and so wantonly multiplied, set of men, the diggers and conductors of navigations.[2]

The navigators' reputation for brawling was well founded, although some excuses could be made for them. The major one was the system of paying them. To start with, they were often not paid cash but in tokens which could be exchanged with tradesmen, who had a deal with the canal company or contractor. These tradesmen could, and often did, overcharge exorbitantly, and sometimes were made to regret it. Hanson discusses the problem in Canal People:

> 'The labourers for cutting the canal are much imposed upon by the extravigant[sic] charges of the Innkeepers', a Leeds & Liverpool Canal committee man had noted in January 1771. No doubt it was much the same in Bardney with the tradesmen milking the navvies for every

> penny they could. They and the villagers lived to regret it. A dispute with the baker grew into a full scale riot as enraged navvies tore pubs apart, drank all the beer 'on the house', robbed the villagers and fought the constables - one of whom died. Only the arrival of the cavalry saved the village from worse.[3]

The other problem was that they were only paid once a month, at the most. This 'led to the storing up of wants which included giant thirsts.'[4] This is demonstrated in the second of Burton's canal novels, The Navigators (1976); in this fictitious case, probably easily matched in reality, the men are not only overcharged for their drink, but cheated out of what is left by the landlord, who also runs the truck system in the camp.[5] Small wonder then, that

> Navvies seemed often to be in the thick of some 'riotous affray', or were 'assembling' and 'parading' in a 'very riotous manner' following pay day (or because of the lack of it), which is no doubt why they were though by some to be 'a constant nuisance to the neighbourhood and the terror of all descriptions of people', while others saw them as 'a savage ungovernable bandetti.'[6]

Elizabeth Fremantle may have only had negative knowledge of canals but one woman, who also probably only had a brief encounter with them, found something more positive to say in this poem:

> Here smooth canals across th' extended plain
> Stretch their long arms to join the distant main.
> The sons of toil, with many a weary stroke,
> Scoop the hard bosom of the solid rock;
> Resistless thro' the stiff opposing clay
> With steady patience work their gradual way;
> Compel the genius of th' unwilling flood
> Thro' the brown horrors of the aged wood:
> 'Cross the lone wastes the silver urn they pour,
> And cheer the barren heath or sullen moor.[7]

This poem, by 'one of our first female poets' according to Phillips in A General History of Inland Navigation (1792), romanticises the work of the navigators and reveals none of the usual bad feeling towards them that existed. The writer of the poem was probably not well acquainted with any navigators but had seen the works from a distance, or made a charitable visit when the workers were on their best behaviour. It is interesting, however, to see someone recognising that it was the navvies who were cutting their way through rock and clay to connect county to county, and not just the engineers. It seems to be an unusual thing for someone, particularly a woman, to notice and admire the skill and technique developed by the navigators, and even more unusual for them to be inspired to write poetry about such a seemingly prosaic subject, giving the navigators the status almost of gods, who can 'compel the genius of th' unwilling flood / Thro' the brown horrors of the aged wood'. This poet may well have been the only person who had anything good to say about them, certainly she was one of very few who even acknowledged their existence.

It is, in fact, a common feature of observations of canal works that the workers themselves are not only anonymous but virtually invisible.[8] Peter Smith, in Waterways Heritage, mentions the problem the researcher today faces:

> In the examination of waterways history, it is easy to forget that the most important element in the system was the people who built the canals and operated the traffic.
>
> Of the builders, the navigation workers, or navvies, we have little detailed information except that they worked hard, often in the most appalling conditions, and they played hard, frequently to the terror of the district where they were encamped.[9]

The Rev. Stebbing Shaw even seems to have trouble actually referring to the navigators; he refers to the busy 'shafts', and claims 'they' wind up material through them (see quotation, p.50). Only at the end does he mention that 'they' are the workers.

ii. Engineers

Besides the fossils discovered during the excavation, the aspects of the canal that most interested Josiah Wedgewood, judging by his letters, were (not including the benefit his business would derive from it) the

pamphlet and the engineer, James Brindley. The pamphlet has already been looked at; Brindley is a subject one cannot avoid when looking at literature of the canal age. It is in the construction period that Brindley belongs (although he is referred to in promotional material and later in the established period), as being a canal engineer he was responsible for the actual building of the canal, and, more importantly, designed the first canal which proved to England that it could be done.

Wedgewood's concern for Brindley was personal as much as professional; this is clear from his letters. Brindley was what would today be called a work-aholic and his expertise in navigations led him to be much in demand for canal projects all over Britain. This concerned Josiah Wedgewood, whose feeling for the friend who, like himself, had risen from an obscure background to a prominent place in the Industrial world, was strong:

> Mr Brindley . . . is going to Scotland & Ireland in a few weeks. I am afraid he will do too much, & leave us before his vast designs are executed, he is so incessantly harassed on every side, that he hath no rest either for his mind or Body, & will not be prevailed upon to take proper care of his health — I most cordially join in your benevolent sentiments respecting Projectors, but do not allow either of your exceptions, for I think Mr Brindley — *The Great. The fortunate, money geting* [sic] Brindley, an object of Pity! and a real sufferer for the good of the Public. — He may get a few thousands, but what does he give in exchange? His *Health* & I fear his Life too, unless he grows wiser, & takes the advice of his friends before it is too late.

Wedgewood's concern and respect was shared by other prominent figures of the day, not least among whom was Erasmus Darwin, who, after Brindley's untimely death, wrote to Wedgewood:

> Your Letter . . . gave me most sincere grief about Mr. Brindley, whom I have always esteem'd to be a great genius, & whose loss is truly a public one. I don't believe he has left his equal. I think the various Navigations should erect him a monument in Westminster Abbey, & hope you will at a proper time give them this Hint. Mr. Stanier sent me no account of him except his death, tho' I so much desir'd it, since if I had understood that he got

> worse, nothing should have hinder'd me from seeing Him again. If Mr. Henshaw took any Journal of his Illness, or other circumstances after I saw Him, *I wish you would ask him for it, & enclose it to me.* And any Circumstances that you recollect of his Life should be wrote down, & I will sometime digest them into an Eulogium. These men should not die, this nature denys, but their Memories are above her malice — Enough!

The praise bestowed upon Brindley by his contemporaries and successors could probably fill a book in itself. Certain words come through again and again, for example, 'Genius', 'noble', and 'great'. The worship that was accorded this man is probably only equated today by that shown towards men like Neil Armstrong, or the hero-worship shown towards sporting or screen stars. The difference is that Brindley's admirers were intelligent, discerning adults, who admired him for what he produced, not an image projected of him. Although it is generally believed that he was illiterate, it seems this was not the case and there are surviving diaries and notebooks of his which could give a more accurate impression of this man.[10] Unfortunately, I have been unable to locate these writings.

There are many other references to Brindley and to Thomas Telford, but these are often concerned with the actual building of a canal and not personal, and so have been covered in discussing the actual construction.

iii. Construction

Other people were drawn to canals for different reasons. Josiah Wedgewood, for instance, visited the workings of the Grand Trunk canal often. He was the Treasurer of the canal company, but his interest went beyond the merely financial. He wrote to his friend, the pamphlet writer Bentley, to tell him of the 'wonderful and surprising curiositys' which had turned up:

> Sometime last month we found under a bed of Clay, at the depth of five yards from the surface, a prodigious rib, with the vertebre of the back bone of a monstrous sized Fish, thought by some connoisseurs to belong to the identical Whale that was so long ago swallowed by Jonah! - Another bone found near the same place in a stratum of Gravel under a bed of Clay of a very considerable thickness, is of so singular a construction that though I have shewn it to several able anatomists, they cannot decide whether it is the *first* or *last* of

> the veterbre of some monstrous animal, nor whether that animal was an Inhabitant of the *Sea* or *Land.*[11]

The discovery of fossils and unusual earth stratum attracted quite a lot of attention. In fact it was a canal surveyor, William Smith, who did the first systematic study of rocks and fossils in Britain, and established Geology as a science.

Wedgewood also found the construction work in itself fascinating. On one occasion he visited the Duke's canal at Runcorn and wrote of his visit to Bentley:

> I have seen a good deal of these matters before, but notwithstanding that, I was quite astonish'd at the vastness of the plan, & the greatness of stile in the execution. The Walls of the Locks are truly admirable, both for strength and beauty of workmanship. The front Lock next to the sea (for such it seems when the Tide is in) in particular, whose walls are compos'd of vast stones from 1 to 12 Tons weight, & yet by the excellent machinery made use of, some of which is still left standing, they had as perfect command of these huge masses of Rock as a common bricklayer of the brick in his hand. In short, to behold ten of these Locks all at one view, with their Gates, Acqueducts [sic], Cisterns, Sluices, bridges, &c. &c., the whole seems to be the work of the Titans, rather than a production of our Pigmy race of beings, & I do not wonder that the Duke is so enamour'd of his handiworks, that he is now in the fourth month of his stay at this place.
>
> (2, pp. 244-6).

He was not alone in marvelling at what could be achieved by men armed only with pick and shovel. A tourist who was impressed by the construction of the Duke's canal wrote:

> I surveyed the duke's men for two hours, and think the industry of bees, or labour of ants, is not to be compared with them, Each man's work seemed to depend, and be connected with his neighbour's, and the whole posse appeared, as I conceive did that of the Tyrians, when they wanted houses to put their heads in and were building Carthage.[12]

This comment, according to Burton, was 'typical', and shows the awe felt by some observers of these great engineering feats. It was not only canals that inspired such comments, but other aspects of the industrial landscape called forth these similar notes:

> by night the numerous fires arising from the works on the opposite hills, and among the several channels of the two valleys, aided by the clangour of the forges in every direction, affect the mind of one unpractised in such scenes with an indescribable sensation of wonder, and transport in fancy the classic observer to the workshop of Vulcan, or an epitome of infernal regions.[13]

> Coalbrookdale wants nothing but Cerberus to give you an idea of the heathen hell. The Severn may pass for the Styx, with this difference that Charon, turned turnpike man, ushers you over the bridge instead of rowing in his crazy boat; the men and women might easily be mistaken for devils and fairies, and the entrance of any one of those blazing caverns where they polish the cylinders, for Tartarus; and, really, if an atheist, who had never heard of Coalbrookdale, could be transported there in a dream, and left to awake at the mouth of one of those furnaces, surrounded on all sides by such a number of infernal objects, though he had been all his life the most profligate unbeliever that ever added blasphemy to incredulity, he would infallibly tremble at the last judgement that in imagination would appear to him.[14]

Even in the 1990s the aqueducts and tunnels of the canals are awe-inspiring, but we would not describe them with the classical allusion used then.

Brindley himself came in for praise which was close in style to that quoted above. In the opinion of one observer: 'The great Mr Brindley [. . .] handles rocks as easily as you would plumb-pies, and makes the four elements subservient to his will . . . when he speaks, all ears listen, and every mind is filled with wonder, at the things he pronounces to be practicable.'[15] Another, the Rev. Shaw, believed that 'an all-contriving power was given to the great Mr Brindley, sufficient to encounter all difficulties, and to remove the most perplexing

obstacles. To his perforating hand the immense hills and stubborn rocks were no unsurmountable difficulty; and he could with the greatest ease carry water over waters.'[16]

The Rev. Stebbing Shaw was one of a number of tourists who included canals in their travels around England. As well as visiting the Bridgewater canal, he saw the workings of both Greywell Tunnel on the Basingstoke canal, and Sapperton tunnel on the Thames and Severn. His description of these are factual, almost documentary-like:

> I . . . saw about 100 men at work, preparing a wide passage for the approach to the mouth, but they had not entered the hill. The morning was remarkably fine, 'The pale descending year, yet pleasing still,' and such an assembly of these sons of labour greatly enlivened the scene. The contractor, agreeable to the request of the company of proprietors, gives the preference to all the natives who are desirous of this work, but such is the power of use over nature, that while these industrious poor are by all their efforts incapable of earning a sustenance, those who are brought from similar works, cheerfully obtain a comfortable support.[17]

> We now approached the great Tunnel, which forms part of the communication between the Severn and the Thames; on each side of the road it extends rather more than a mile; one end penetrates the hill at the village of Sapperton, the other comes out in Heywood; we turned on our left to visit the former, and saw the shafts busy in several places, at the distance of about 230 yards from each other; by this means they wind up the materials from the cavity and expedite the work. The earth is principally a hard blue marle, and in some places quite a rock which they blow up with gunpowder; the depth of these pits are upon an average eighty yards from the surface. The first contractor receives £7 per yard from the company, and the labourers rent at the rate of about £5 per yard, finding candles, gunpowder &c. The workers are in eight gangs, and continue eight hours at a time, day and night.[18]

Rev. Shaw seems to have been interested in the working conditions of the labourers (he also describes a visit down a mine), but one does not get the impression that he ever regards the navigators as individual people. None are mentioned separately, and the reader gets the impression of an anonymous mass of figures, digging, or blasting, or doing whatever they are paid to do. One cannot condemn Reverend Shaw for failing to regard the navigators as persons rather than 'sons of labour' as he is by no means unusual in so doing, as we have already seen in The Fool of Quality, see page 31.

The most interesting account of canal construction is Robert Southey's description of the Caledonian Canal, in his Journal of a Tour in Scotland in 1817. The interest in this is twofold for not only is Southey a professional writer 'who was able to describe the works with clarity and elegance'[19], but he also visited the diggings in company with the engineer, Thomas Telford. Burton claims that 'there is no comparable eye-witness account of just what was involved in a major canal construction'[20], and this is supported by my own research. Certainly Southey was the only journalist to do a tour devoted to engineering.

The travellers inspected roads and ports as well as canals so Southey's Journal contains an account of the revitalising of virtually the entire transport system of Scotland. The journal covers more than simply the basic construction of the canal. The highlands of Scotland were still suffering from the effects of the Rebellion in 1745, and deprived of their natural leaders the highlanders were a rude, disorganised race. One of the aims in building the Caledonian Canal and the other works Telford was responsible for was to provide employment for the local men and perhaps encourage them to be more industrious in their own lives. In fact it was in some ways a local welfare project as the work was by no means built in the quickest and easiest way, which would have been to hire experienced workers from England. Instead local labour was used as much as possible as Telford deliberately set out to reverse the trend of hiring contractors with their gangs. However, even though he wanted to train the Highlanders to the work he found it necessary to bring in skilled workers as examples.[21] Southey noticed the effects of the opportunity for employment and improvement. 'The enduring value and interest of the Journal of a Tour in Scotland lies in the picture it gives, in the scores of anecdotes and acute observations, of the reaction of this network of good waterways and landways upon the economic and social progress of the country.'[22]

As mentioned earlier, Southey had the advantage of touring with Telford. The influence of Telford and his other companion, Rickman, is obvious in the Journal. Southey mentions many things which it is doubtful he would have observed or taken note of if the import of them had not been pointed out to him by his

companions. Much of his description is technical and it is clear the explanations of the engineer were not lost on him. Southey was also an advocate of government sponsored aid programmes, such as this was for the highlands, as well as for the shipping trade, and consequently was careful to note the advantages produced by this project. Little reference is made to the advantages that would hopefully result for shipping from this canal, as the immediate benefits to the surrounding countryside demanded all Southey's attention during his tour. However, he does mention this ultimate goal in his "Inscriptions on the Caledonian Canal", which will be covered in a later section.

One observer who was more interested in the organisation behind the construction than the digging itself, was the Swedish 'industrial spy' Svedenstierna. He took time to attend a meeting of the shareholders in Rochdale and discover the problems they encounter and have to deal with:

> The canal, which was already navigable, was now supposed to be continued through hilly and uneven country, for a few English miles. In the execution of this work several hindrances had occurred, partly because of the locality, partly because of the quarrelsome company, which gave rise to such violent dissensions at the meeting, that the entire project could have been abandoned, if the shareholders had not been bound by an Act of Parliament to have the canal finished in a certain time.[23]

This evidence of industrial relations problems perhaps vindicates Whitworth's lack of faith in canal companies, although they were by no means all like this, or no canal would ever have been finished.

Svedenstierna also gives a brief description of the construction of the Duke's canal, as an example of what could be done:

> In the years 1758 and 1759, when the recently deceased Duke of Bridgewater obtained the first Acts of Parliament for the building of this canal, only a few small rivers had been made navigable, by means of locks, but no work of this kind had been undertaken on the great plan of a horizontal channel of water over valleys and rivers and through mountains to avoid the obstruction and expense of locks, and thereby to economise the water supply, fairly small in many parts of England. Scarcely had the Duke received permission, than he had

> already taken up the work at all points, and obtained possession, partly through purchase, partly through leasing, of the land through which the canal was to run. . . . In two years the work was near to completion.[24]

The act of devising and constructing this canal could draw praise even from those with no patriotic pride in England and the English.

Another writer with an eye for a canal was J. Aiken. His book A Description of the Country from Thirty to Forty Miles Around Manchester was first published in 1795 and therefore written in the midst of the canal building boom. Consequently there are many references to canals in it, both existing and under construction. Aiken was not much concerned with the technical details of canal construction, although he does describe aqueducts and weirs in detail at times; his interest was mainly in the advantages that canals would bring to the surrounding countryside. In his descriptions of towns he mentions the improvements that canals will bring, for example, at Ashton-under-Lyne: 'Coals are got at the very edge of the town in abundance, whence they will be conveyed to Manchester by the canal which is now nearly finished. Its advantages to the town and neighbourhood will be inestimable, particularly in the improvement of the soil by lime and other manures.'[25] At Fairfield, 'The Manchester, Ashton, and Oldham canal comes close to this place, which will be of infinite advantage to it, as well for the carrying of goods to and from Manchester and Ashton, as for procuring a supply of coals nearly as cheap as at the pit'(p. 233). Rochdale will reap many advantages:

> Rochdale hitherto has not had the advantage of a navigation; but a canal is now cutting which will connect it with the navigable river Calder on the one side, and with the duke[sic] of Bridgewater's canal at Manchester on the other; and thus afford a communication with the ports of Liverpool and Hull, and with the whole system of internal canal navigation. Upwards of 290,000l. has been subscribed to carry this scheme into execution, which must be of the greatest benefit to the town, as well in respect to its manufactures, as its supply of provisions and merchandize. (p. 249)

As well as mentioning canals in connection with each settlement they passed by, Aiken also has a section on canals. Here he discusses the path of the canal and the advantages it will bring, as in this comment on the Peak Forest Canal:

> Another newly projected canal, called the Peak-forest, the act for which passed in March 1794, will augment the communications of the preceding navigation, as well as of the general system. It proceeds from Milton near Chapel-le-Frith in the Peak of Derbyshire, and entering Cheshire near Whalley-bridge (to which a branch is carried) crosses its eastern horn by Disley, Marple, Mellor, and Chadkirk, and joins the Ashton-under-Lyne canal near Dukinfield-bridge. The great object of this undertaking is to convey at a cheap rate the lime with which that part of the peak is stored, to all the country of Cheshire, Yorkshire, and Lancashire, with which the canal communicates. (pp. 132-3)

Although this sounds like a rather dry commentary, Aiken retains all the enthusiasm for the new form of transport that was lost somewhat once canals became established.

The following account published in the Gentleman's Magazine in 1772 gives an entirely factual account of the progress of a canal:

> INLAND NAVIGATION *continued. Some account of the Navigable Canal now making from* Chester *to* Middlewich.
>
> This Canal was surveyed, in the years 1767, 1769, and 1770, by several surveyors and engineers; and, in the latter end of 1769, application was made to Parliament by the Corporation and Gentlemen of Chester, but at that time their petition was not attended with success. In the latter end of 1770, application was made again, and an Act obtained, but with a (strange) restriction, That it shall not unite, or communicate, with the Staffordshire Canal at Middle-wich. It was begun to be cut in April last, employs a considerable number of men at present, and is likely to prove a great advantage to the city of Chester, and the country thro' which it is to pass.

In this case it is the fact of the canal construction that is being mentioned, not the act of it. This article reveals that even as early as 1772, the digging of a canal had become, if not exactly commonplace, then at least unexciting to some observers. (Incidentally, because of the 'strange' restriction mentioned, the canal was not a great success, having no direct connection with the rest of the waterway system).

A factor which may have been very influential in determining what interest, if any, a person took in canals was where they lived. In London not only was there a good supply of food and necessities from the surrounding countryside but there was also the port of London, providing contact with other ports throughout England as well as abroad. Consequently, there was never the need for canals as there was in other parts of the country, and although canals were built in London, there was probably never the interest in them that there was in, for example, Manchester or Birmingham. The only connection most Londoners would have had with canals would have been if they invested in them, and then their only concern was the possible profits to be made from them; their personal advantage and not the advantages to the country in general. This may have influenced the amount of literature to be found around canals at all stages, not just the construction stage, as London was, of course, the cultural centre of England and many writers were based there. It certainly does seem to have been the case that those writers who did notice and mention the construction of canals were not Londoners.

2. THE INSIDE VOICE

i. Navigators

As this thesis is studying the way in which interest in canals is reflected by the literature that surrounds it, at this point it is necessary to point out that the only people who were interested in the navigators, especially in reading about them, seems to have been themselves. As has already been shown, the general literature of the time scarcely mentioned them. For this reason, most of the information one can gather about them comes from either writings about the railway navvies, who were the same men in a slightly later era, or from the private literature of the navigators themselves, their songs. Studying the ballads and songs of the navigators does not tell us much about what the public thought of them, but we already know that they were disliked. The ballads do reveal the reasons why this group of men were were regarded as a menace and a threat to society, for they made no attempts to disguise their way of life in their songs and were, in fact, proud of it. A number of the songs also include accounts of encounters with people outside the canal, and so from them we can gain a view of the public response to the navigators.

Ballads are very important when looking at the lives of all working people during the Industrial Revolution, as they were sometimes the only (and generally the main) literature to come from groups of workers — people who were often illiterate and for whom song was the only way to tell their story. Geoffrey Grigson thinks that "the popular balladry of particular working communities in and after the nineteenth century . . . is on the whole depressed and depressing. Exploring it is like picking through a vast rubbish dump, in which a glittering good thing is occasionally to be found".[26] Leslie Shepard's opinion is more relevant to this work when he says: "Broadside ballads are of enormous importance for the light they throw upon the everyday interests, activities, events and opinions of the common people over several centuries."[27] And although Gordon Hall Gerould did not have a high opinion of broadside ballads, his comment of traditional ballads is relevant and appropriate: 'Ballads are not simply narrative songs: they are folk-lore as well — a record of the past, in that they embody the experiences, the beliefs, and the imaginings of the people who have made and sung them.'[28] That many of these songs, although not constructed in the oral tradition, have survived in memory to be recorded or written down at a much later date is a sign of how relevant to the people these songs were; they have been repeated from generation to generation as hard times, strikes, or mining disasters recur.

One fragment which has survived probably without the benefit of being printed is "Navigation":

> Come roll up, my lads, and you shall have a prize
> In all parts of the nation
> Where all young lads and swaggering blades
> That work on the navi, navigation.[29]

This song was noted down from the singing of a man called Jim Creedy, aged 98, on the 4th August, 1908. I have come across no other printing of any part of this song, which suggests that it has survived purely through oral transmission. It tells us little of the navigators, and, like many of the other songs collected, it is possible that it was originally an army recruiting song which has been adapted to the canals. It does suit the tone of the navigators, however, and may have been used to recruit new men to the works during busy times, such as the 1790s, when many canals were being built throughout England and labour was naturally scarce in some areas.

There are no songs which give a straight-forward account of the work the navigators did, but there are some which cover both their work and social lives. One of these is "The Bold Navigators":

On Monday morning we make it a rule,

For every man to choose his own tool,

For he that comes first, may choose the best,

And he who comes last may take all the rest.

Chorus: For that's the rule of the bold navigator,

For we are jovial banksmen all.

On Tuesday morning when we go to work,

We strip off our jackets, and tighten our shirts,

We strip off our jackets, and let them out free,

We drive our poles by one, two, or three.

It's when that we come to the bottom run

We fill our barrows to our chin,

We fill our barrows breast high,

If you don't wheel it another will try.

It's when that we come to the main plank wheel,

We lower our hands and hold fast on our heels,

For if the plank does bend or go,

Our ganger on the top cries, 'look out below.'

When we are struck by heavy frost or snow

We'll blow up our mess and off we'll go;

We'll call to our time-keeper, without any damp,

To let us have our time before we go on tramp.

When that it does begin for to rain,

We'll (gath)er up our barrows and all gang in,

For it's into a whiskey shop we go,

We don't give a d--n whether we work or no.

We'll tell our landlady without any damp,

We'll ( )er up her tommy shop before we go on tramp:

For that's the rule of the bold navigator,

For we are jovial banksmen all.

We'll tell our gaffer before we do go,

That it's not our rule to pay what we owe;

For that's the rule of the bold navigators,

For we are jovial banksmen all.[30]

One thing that is clear from this song is that the navigators were not ashamed of their profession. It may have been menial but it was not unskilled labour, as was soon shown whenever attempts were made to hire local men instead of experienced navigators. (It was difficult for newcomers to move enough dirt to make even a poor wage whilst the old hands could earn well above the average compared with miners, mill-workers and, especially, farmhands). The navigators were strong men, and their life had many advantages over that of other workers, mainly in that they worked outdoors, and were free to move on whenever they liked. Also they were often not made to work in bad weather, although this was not from concern for their health. The chances of being smothered by a fall of mud while working at the bottom of the deep cutting in the rain were small, but it did happen. In many cases it was simply too dangerous to work in wet weather; the possibility of slipping when wheeling a barrow up the side of a cutting was ever present but much more likely in the mud. So a rainy day could mean the day off to be spent drinking and singing. These aspects of the life are made clear in this song and, for those who could do the work, the life of a navigator was a good one.

Also made clear in the song are some of the reasons why navigators were not very popular. They drank a lot, usually consuming most of their wages, and they were wanderers; if they disliked something about

one job they would just pack up and move on to the next canal under construction. Whenever they had the chance, for instance when they had been paid or the weather was too bad to work, they would simply head for the nearest public house or 'whiskey shop' and drink until they ran out of money and decided to go back to work. Having started drinking they usually ended up fighting and their opponents were likely to be those whom they felt had done them an injury, for instance, the keeper of the 'tommy shop' who supplied them with their food, usually at a vastly exaggerated price for a decidedly inferior product. The navigators felt no loyalty to anyone except their fellow workers and their disrespect for others probably helped to earn them the bad name they carried.

The possible origins of this particular song are suggested by the second to last verse which mentions going "on tramp" and it is possible that the song was originally made by one of group of men who walked off a job after a riot or an argument with the 'gaffer' or the 'landlady' of the pub and tommy shop (the two were often combined). One man would have sung the verses with the rest of the men adding the chorus. From there a song like this would have passed around the canal system from gang to gang, and somewhere along the way it was printed on a broadsheet, for the benefit of those amongst the navigators who could read. This may well have happened later in the nineteenth century when the song could have been taken over by the railway navvies, having been passed on to them in the same manner as it passed from canal to canal.[31]

Most other songs are not as informative as this one and actually make little reference to the work done by the navigators. It would seem all that was necessary to link a ballad with digging was to mention the tools of the navigators, the pick, the shovel, and the wheelbarrow. These are the motif of the navigators, and are mentioned in songs where they are the only element of their working life.

One such song is 'Paddy upon the Canal'. The title makes it clear that this is definitely a canal song, but there is also a mystery attached to its origins. There are two versions of this ballad, with no major differences between the two but with many minor ones. One version is English and the other is American, but this involves only a change from 'Newcastle' in the English version to 'Phildelphia'[sic] in the American.[32] What can be noted from studying these ballads is the way in which changes occur in the printing of them. I have come across the English ballad in two publications, and there are at least twenty differences between the facsimile of the broadsheet in Canal Songs and the copy in Strike the Bell, although this was taken from the same broadsheet (this is made clear by the existence of the comment on the purchase of the broadsheet on the bottom of it). Some of these differences are changes in spelling, capitalization, or punctuation (spelling

changes both eradicate old mistakes as in 'sach'/'such' and create new ones such as 'saucy'/'jaucy'), others are small alterations in the words, such as contractions. Possibly Palmer deliberately altered these to make the metre of the song more regular. However these things happen, it becomes clear that simply reprinting a ballad can change the text considerably, just as each rendition of it could change it when sung. Gerould has commented that 'neither the words nor the tunes of ballads are constants. . . . singers of ballads are quite unconscious of changing them and yet never sing them, line by line and musical phrase by musical phrase, quite like their neighbours. . . . Any effort to recover an "original" or "authentic" version is thus quite fruitless, for all renditions have equal standing as long as the ballad remains in free circulation, unaffected by alien influences of one sort or another.'[33] In this case Gerould would have considered that the ballad had been affected by alien influences, i.e. it had been printed, but for a ballad of this type that was unavoidable and I consider that Gerould's premise applies to this ballad as much as to a more traditional one.

There is also a considerable amount of mystery concerning the original date and the place of origin of this ballad. Palmer dates it at 1847 because this was when his copy of it was purchased, also because the term "ganger" did not come into use until 1849 according to the Oxford English Dictionary. I feel it may it may be necessary to go against the O. E. D. on this occasion however, as it is most likely that this ballad was in existence long before the 1840s and the purchasing of it in 1847 is more an indication of the popularity of such ballads and possibly the interest that was still being taken in canals by some sections of the public, despite the now-present railways.[34] As for the country of origin, England seems more likely although it is possible that the ballad was connected with the building of the Erie Canal in America (this was opened in 1825).[35] Either way, the existence of the ballad on both sides of the Atlantic and possibly spanning a twenty- year period indicates that there was considerable interest in ballads of this sort.

A study of the ballad itself reveals more of the way of the navigators when in contact with society. As well as being only too ready for a fight, they were clearly attractive figures to certain young women, and hence extremely unpopular with their parents:

I fell in love with a farmer's daughter,

And she was right proud, do you see?

I caught her right round by the middle

And set her right down on my knee.

The old woman got up in a hurry
And loudly began for to bawl,
Saying, "Get out, you saucy great jade,
For Paddy will prove your downfall."

The girls they do all love me here,
Or wherever that I do go:
There's Sarah and Betsey and Polly,
They all do call me their beau.
The old woman got up in a hurry
And loudly began for to bawl,
Saying, 'We never got good of our daughter
Since Paddy came on the canal.'

The appeal of the black sheep was obviously strong at this time, but one cannot blame the mothers for opposing the navigators' courting of their daughters.

The song makes very little mention of what sort of work the navigators did bar referring to the tools of the trade, but it does bear up their reputation for fighting:

I learnt the art of navigation;
I think it's a very fine trade:
I can handle the pick and the shovel,
Likewise the wheelbarrow and spade.
I learned to be very handy;
Although I am not very tall,
I could handle the sprig of shillelagh
With every a boy on the canal.

Fighting and wenching were, along with drinking, the most popular leisure pursuits for many of the navigators, as is borne out in nearly all the songs looked at here.

Common in songs of the navigators are tales of their exploits with women. "The Navvy Lad", is one example of this, although it is complicated by the fact that the song is probably not original in this form but appears to have come from the army or navy. This is indicated by the absence of a definite canal basis in the lyrics. Only one verse actually refers to a navvy at all; the rest of the song does not mention the occupation of Johnny:

1 On one midsummer morning as I have heard them say,
The rout is out, we must all turn out and all must march away,
Leaving many pretty girls in our town, crying: Adieu, adieu, adieu,
The bonny, bonny lad is going away. Pray girls, what shall we do?

2 The mother said unto her daughter: I'll have you close confined,
All in your lonesome or you shall change your mind.
If you will confine me seven long years, after that set me free,
I'll ramble the wide world over till I find my sweet Johnny.

3 The mother said unto her daughter what makes you look so strong?
How can you wed with a navvie lad the wide world for to range?
The navvies you know are roving blades, but earns[sic] a goodish pay,
But hoping this maintain their wives when they spends it all away.

4 If she will consent to marry me and tramp the country round
I'll dress my love in velvet, I'll ringle her hair in blue,
If she'll consent to marry me and tramp the country through.[36]

A comparison of this song with the also undated "The Navvy Boy" indicates that "The Navvy Lad" may be an amalgamation of "The Navvy Boy" with a completely different song. The third verse of each song is basically

the same, and this verse has probably been transplanted into "The Navvy Lad" in place of one which stated a different occupation; judging by the context a soldier may have been mentioned. The similarity to a definite soldiers' song, "The Manchester 'Angel'" increases the likelihood of this:

It's coming down to Manchester to gain my liberty,
I met a pretty young doxy and she seemed full of glee.
Yes, I met a pretty young doxy, the prettiest ever I see,
At the Angel Inn in Manchester, there is the girl for me.

Then early next morning, just at the break of day,
I went to my love's bedside, my morning vows to pay.
I hugged her, I cuddled her, I bade her to lie warm;
And she said: 'My jolly soldier, do you mean me any harm?'

'To mean you any harm, my love, is a thing that I would scorn.
If I stopped along with you all night, I'd marry you in the morn.
Before my lawful officer, my vows I will fulfil.'
Then she said: 'My jolly soldier, you may lie as long as you will.'

Our rout came on the Thursday, on the Monday we marched away.
The drums and fifes and bugles so sweetly did play.
Some hearts they were merry, but mine was full of woe.
She says: 'May I go along with you?' 'Oh no, my love, oh no.

'If you should stand on sentry go, on a cold and bitter day,
Your colours they would go, love, and your beauty would decay.
If I saw you handle a musket, love, it would fill my heart with
woe
So stay at home, dear Nancy.' But still she answered: 'No.

'I'll go down to your officer, and I'll buy your discharge,

Ten guineas I'll surrender if they'll set you at large.

And if that will not do, my love, along with you I'll go,

So will you take me with you now?' And still I answered: 'No.'

'I'll go down in some nunnery and there I'll end my life.

I'll never have no lover now, nor yet become a wife.

But constant and true-hearted, love, for ever I'll remain,

And I never will get married till my soldier comes again!'[37]

This seems a much more likely setting for "The Navvy Lad" than that of a canal under construction, but songs were clearly freely available for all to take and adapt as they wished.

"The Navvy Boy" is a much more interesting song and sounds far more authentic than the other as it uses the correct terminology and tells a logical story:

When I was young and tender I left my native home,

And often to old Scotland I started out to roam;

As I walked down through Bishoptown a-seeking for employ,

The ganger he knew by me I was a Navvy Boy.

As soon as I did get employ, for lodgings I did seek;

It happened to be that very night with the ganger I did sleep;

He had one only daughter and I became her joy,

For she longed to go and tramp with her own dear Navvy Boy.

Says the mother to her daughter, 'I think it very strange,

That you would wed a Navvy Boy this wide world for to range;

For navvies they are rambling boys and have but little pay;

How could a man maintain a wife with fourteenpence a day?'

Says the daughter to the mother, 'You need not run them down;
My father was a Navvy Boy when he came to this town;
He roamed about from town to town just seeking for employ;
Go where he will, he's my love still; he's my own dear Navvy Boy.'

Now just a short time after this her father died I'm told,
And left unto his daughter five hundred pounds in gold;
And when she got the money, soon I became her joy,
For she longed to go and tramp it with her own dear Navvy Boy.[38]

These songs could also be railway songs (the date and use of the word "ganger" has been discussed above), but Raven included "The Navvy Boy" in his volume of Canal Songs and there is no evidence of whether the navvies are building a railway or a canal. This song actually has a happy ending, and presents a more positive image of the navigator than has previously been seen, perhaps this accounts for the popularity which presumably led to its survival.

"The Bold English Navvy" is another similar song, with tenuous connections to canals. It is very like a song called "The Kettle Smock" or "The Courtin' Coat", the only change necessary being from the words 'navvy boots' to 'courtin' coat'[39]. It is a song of seduction, as is indicated in the fourth verse:

O she opened the window and than let me in
Twas into her bedroom she landed me then
Th'ould night it being cold and the blankets rolled on
And I slept there all night with my navvy boots on[40]

Once again there is no mention of work, just a woman seduced and then abandoned to bear the consequences, presumably an act and an attitude that the average navvy was proud of.

Another song, "Navvy on the Line", has been included in collections of railway songs but there is nothing in the song which eliminates the possibility of it being a canal song. It is also similar to "The Navvy Boy" and "The Navvy Lad" but has a more cynical approach. It starts:

I am a navvy bold, that has tramp'd the country round, sir,
For to get a job of work where any can be found, sir,
I left my native home, my friends and my relations,
To ramble up and down the town and work in various stations

CHORUS

I am a navvy don't you see, I love my beer in all my prime,
Because I am a navvy that is working on the line.

The protagonist in this song doesn't seem to work at all, but occupies himself by drinking and not getting married:

I have got a job of work all in the town of Bury,
And working on the line is a thing that makes me merry,
I can use my pick and spade, and my wheelbarrow,
And I can court the lasses too, but never intend to marry.

I worked a fortnight, and then it came to pay day,
And when I geet[sic] my wages I thought I'd have a play day,
And then to a little spree in Clark street went quite handy,
And I sat me down in Jenkinson's beside a Fanny Brandy.

Once again the motif of the navigators is there for identification, but the rest of the song is about his relationship with "Fanny Brandy" whom he agrees to marry and then runs away from, neglecting to pay the

landlady for his lodgings at the same time. This song has even less romance to it than the others and presents, to the modern eye and probably the Victorian middle-class eye as well, a fairly despicable person.

It is a relief to find that there was more to life for the navigators than drinking and seduction. "The Navigator's New Victory; Or The Tailors Done Over" is about something quite different, a race between a navigator and various men of the town of Chester. Nothing negative, even by today's standards, is said about the navigator, who presumably must have lived a bit more cleanly than his fellow workers in order to be such a good runner:

> Ye sportsmen of Chester, I'd have you draw near,
> And of a fam'd runner, you quickly shall hear;
> I'll sing of the praise of Joe Baker by name,
> Who from Over, near Delamere forest, he came.
>
> As a navigator and runner he's known to excel,
> After running, he works at the Ellesmere canal;
> In going round the Roodee, which is more than a mile,
> He is only five minutes and comes in with a smile.

This ballad would have commemorated an actual event and was probably composed after the races and sold in the district and along the nearby canals. While there is no fighting in this song, it also provides a reason for animosity between the navigators and the locals; competition would have been fierce between them at times, not only on the race ground but also for the favours of the local women.

It is unfortunate that there appears to be a lack of originality amongst the ballads of the navigators; it would seem that most of their songs were highly derivative if not blatantly copied. There are a few songs, however, which stand out as having been composed by one of the navigators, or by someone with a certain amount of knowledge of them and their ways. Perhaps it is understandable that such an anonymous group of people should have an anonymous group of songs, for their way of life was not likely to attract the more cultured members of the working class who would have been the ones more likely to compose songs.

ii. Engineers

The navigators may not have written their way into social history but others involved with canals were able to express themselves in words. With Brindley, Thomas Telford is regarded as being one of the foremost canal engineers. I have not come across any writing of Brindley's, but samples of Telford's writings are available to be examined. Amongst them is a poem, published in Ruddiman's Edinburgh Gazette in 1779. I have seen only a part of the poem but it reveals some things about Telford:

> Nor pass the tentie curious lad,
> Who o'er the ingle hangs his head,
> And begs of neighbours books to read;
> For hence arise
> Thy country's sons, who far are spread
> Baith bold and wise.[41]

Telford's Scottish origins are clear, perhaps emphasised by the current vogue for the vernacular, set by Burns. Also seen in this fragment, if one is permitted to read it as autobiographical, is his way of seeing himself and his career. Not as disadvantaged as Brindley, Telford still had to make his own way through the world, and succeeded to the extent that the name of the once 'curious lad' is now familiar to engineers throughout the world, owing to the survival of some of the structures he was responsible for, and to the attention of biographers such as Samuel Smiles and L. T. C. Rolt.

Another point of interest that can be drawn from this poem is the effect of literature upon Telford. As a child he may have begged books from neighbours, and as an adult he was a much more cultured man than Brindley, who once went to see Garrick do Richard III and was so disturbed that he declared he would never see another play on any account.[42] Telford was not necessarily a better engineer, but his wider knowledge of the world, acquired partly through books, would have given his a broader mind than Brindley possessed.

Telford also left letters, in which he wrote of his work, particularly when he was appointed engineer to 'the canal which is projected to join the Mersey, the Dee and the Severn': 'It is the greatest work, I believe, now in hand in this kingdom, and will not be completed for many years to come. . . . This will be a great and laborious undertaking, but the line which it opens is vast and noble. . . . The work will require great labour and

exertions, but it is worthy of them all.'[43] He knew the work would not be easy, and there would be other complications along the way for: 'There are contentions, jealousies, and prejudices, stationed like gloomy sentinels from one extremity of the line to the other. But, as I have heard my mother say that an honest man may look the Devil in the face without being afraid, so we must just trudge along in the old way.'[44] The problems for an engineer were not just the practical ones of constructing a canal, they also had to deal with all the public relations problems that arose.

Unfortunately, for the most part the life of a successful canal engineer was a busy one and time for leisure and writing was not easily available. Fortunately there were others to comment on the work they did and so our knowledge of them is not as limited as it could be. For this we have the interest of members of the public like Southey to thank, those people who took the time to observe and comment on the more respectable side of canal construction.

NOTES

1 The Wynne Diaries 1789-1820, ed: Anne Fremantle (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 301.

2 Anthony Burton, The Canal Builders (London: Eyre Methuen, 1972), p. 167. Quoting from Gentleman's Magazine (August, 1795).

3 Harry Hanson, Canal People (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1978), p. 22.

4 Hanson, p. 22.

5 Anthony Burton, The Navigators (London: Macdonald and Janes, 1976).

6 Hanson, pp. 22-3.

7 Burton, The Canal Builders, p. 189. From J. Phillips, A General History of Inland Navigation (1792).

8 Burton, The Canal Builders, p. 156. The navigator was 'very like Chesterton's 'invisible' postman; he was such an accepted part of the scene that the writers and travellers who went to look at the work in progress rarely noticed his presence or felt it worthy of mention. If he was noticed at all, it was not as an individual, nor even as one of a particularly important group; he was far more likely to end up as the subject of a literary image or a classical analogy.

9 Peter Smith, Waterways Heritage, 2nd edition (Luton: Luton Museum and Art Gallery, 1972), p. 13.

10 Mark Baldwin, Canal Books: A Guide to the Literature of the Waterways (London: M & M Baldwin, 1984), p. 25.

11 Eliza Meteyard, The Life and Works of Josiah Wedgewood, from his Private Correspondence and Family Papers. 2 vols. (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1865-6), 1, p. 500. All further references to Wedgewood are from this source.

12 Burton, The Canal Builders, p. 156.

13 Barrie Trinder, The Making of the Industrial Landscape (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1982), p. 90. Quoting from Henry Skrine, Two Successive Tours through the whole of Wales and Several of the English Counties (1798).

14 Trinder, p. 90. Quoting Charles Dibdin, Observations on a Tour through almost the whole of England and a considerable part of Scotland (1825).

15 Burton, The Canal Builders, p. 91. Quoting Anon, A History of Inland Navigations.

16 Burton, The Canal Builders, p. 86. Quoting Rev. S. Shaw, A Tour to the West of England in 1788 (1789).

17 Burton, The Canal Builders, pp. 158-9. Quoting Rev. S, Shaw, A Tour to the West of England in 1788 (1799).

18 Burton, The Canal Builders, p. 196. Quoting Shaw, Tour to the West of England (1799).

19 Burton, The Canal Builders, p. 119.

20 Burton, The Canal Builders, p. 119.

21 Burton, The Canal Builders, p. 159.

22 Robert Southey, Journal of a Tour in Scotland in 1819 (London: John Murray, 1929). From the Introduction by C. H. Herford, p. xxv.

23 Eric Thomas Svedenstierna, Svedenstierna's Tour of Great Britain, 1802-3; The Travel Diary of an Industrial Spy , Trans. E. L. Dellow, (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1973), p. 179.

24 Svedenstierna, p. 177.

25 J. Aiken, A Description of the Country from Thirty to Forty Miles around Manchester (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1968), p. 227.

26 Geoffrey Grigson, ed., The Penguin Book of Ballads (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), p. 14.

27 Leslie Shepard, The Broadside Ballad: A Study in Origins and Meaning (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1962), p. 54.

28 Gordon Hall Gerould, The Ballad of Tradition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 131.

29 Cecil Sharp, comp., Cecil Sharp's Collection of English Folk Songs, ed: Maud Karpeles (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), Vol II, p. 607.

30 Jon Raven, Canal Songs (Wolverhampton: Broadside Records, 1974), p. 14. From a Broadside, Manchester Reference Library.

31 Much of the information available about the lives of the navigators comes from studies of the railway navvies. They were basically the same men, they did the same job, and they sang the same songs. Because of this it has been necessary to refer to songs that are more closely linked with the railway age than with canals, but it is probable that these songs did originate with the canals. Information on the Railway Navvies comes from Terry Coleman, The Railway Navvies: A History of the Men who made the Railways (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1965).

32 All three versions are printed in the appendix side-by-side, to allow for comparison of these differences.

33 Gerould, pp. 163-4.

34 The fact that the American version is on a broadside with a ballad on the "Death of Nelson" can also be disregarded for the same reason; Nelson was a popular figure for years after his death and the ballad would have remained in print to satisfy the public interest.

35 I am indebted to Martha Vicinus personally for this suggestion as well as for the American version of the ballad itself.

36 Cecil Sharp, Vol I, p. 32.

37 The Penguin Book of English Folk Songs, eds: R. Vaughan Williams and A.L. Lloyd (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959), p.66.

38 Jon Raven, Canal Songs , p. 16.

39 For a fragment of "The Courtin' Coat" see the appendix.

40 Unless fully quoted in the text, ballads and poems will be included and referenced in the appendix.

41 Burton, The Canal Builders, p. 112.

42 Burton, The Canal Builders, p. 90.

43 Samuel Smiles, The Life of Thomas Telford (London; John Murray, 1867), p. 151. From a letter to Mr Andrew Little, dated 29th September, 1793.

44 Smiles, pp. 152-3. From a letter to Mr Andrew Little, dated 3rd November, 1793.

The most public moment for a canal was usually the opening ceremony. Interest in the canal had been built up in the area in the preceding months or years and all the locals and supporters would be on hand to celebrate and see what they hoped and believed would be the arrival of prosperity to their region. To promote this feeling of impending prosperity the canal was usually opened by the transportation of boatloads of what would be its major cargoes through the last completed, or most important, part of the waterway. The company directors would travel in one boat, followed by boats loaded with coal, grain, and lime or other fertilisers, the ritual bearing a resemblance to a fertility rite and serving a similar purpose in wishing for a blessing on the endeavour. There would be a formal opening ceremony, followed by perhaps a poem or song composed by someone with an interest in the canal, and then a banquet would be held for the directors and important townsfolk, with a separate celebration at a suitable and safe distance away for the navigators.

1. OPENING CELEBRATIONS

That there was usually great interest in the opening of a new canal is indicated by the presence of articles in newspapers on the subject. For instance, the opening of the Thames and Severn Canal was the cause of this letter printed in the Bath Chronicle:

Friday, Nov. 20th, 1789

Sir,

Yesterday a marriage took place between Madam Sabrina, a lady of Cambrian extraction, and mistress of very extensive property in Montgomeryshire, (where she was born) and counties of Salop, Stafford, Worcester, and Gloucester, and Mr Thames, commonly called Father Thames, a native of Gloucestershire, now a merchant trading from the city of London to all parts of the known world. The ceremony took place at Lechlade, by special licence, in the presence of hundreds of admiring spectators, with myself, who signed as witnesses; — from whence the happy pair went to breakfast at Oxford; dine at London, and consummate at Gravesend; when the venerable Neptune, his whole train of inferior deities and nymphs, with his wife Venus and her train, are to fling the stocking. An union which presages many happy consequences, and numerous offspring. — I mention the lady's name, as the tendre

came from her, after many struggles with her modesty and Cambrian aversion to a Saxon spouse.

A Traveller.[1]

Missing from this letter is the serious tone that was prevalent in literature of the promotion and construction stages. Now that the canal was actually finished, the gaiety and joy that characterised the opening ceremonies themselves had spread to the literature. There seemed to be no doubt that the canal would do all that had been promised. The 'hundreds of admiring spectators' would probably have been a mixture of locals and investors or promoters. The Thames and Severn Canal had been long dreamed of before it was actually begun and the idea would have gathered many supporters over the years. A measure of the interest in it is given by the fact that the opening ceremony was 'described in almost identical passages appearing in The Morning Post & Daily Advertiser, 24 November, The Glocester Journal, 30 November, and The Gentleman's Magazine, vol 59, p. 1139. An abridged version evidently from the same source, appeared in The Times, 26 November 1789'.[2]

The form as well as the tone of this announcement is unusual. Touches of levity also appear in the report on the opening of the Croydon Canal (see below) but to take the form of a wedding announcement seems to have been a original idea. It is appropriate however, and the imagery accurately describes the effect of the canal, which, like the Trent and Mersey, was designed to link two already existent waterways. Sadly this was a marriage which did not last (though attempts are currently being made to restore the connection, or at least part of it); the Thames and Severn being one of a number of canal schemes which was based more on hope than practicality. To continue the marriage metaphor, it was a love match but lacked the wherewithal to survive. For while the scheme was very popular, the canal was badly designed, having a long level area at its highest point which was continually losing water down the locks at each end, and there were no sufficient water supplies to replace this loss. This failure of the canal in practice did not mean the end of interest in it, for that notice which was given to it on the day of its "wedding" was being paid still in the late 1800s when Temple Thurston described his (possibly imaginary) voyage through it (as described in The Flower of Gloster(1911)), and is still being paid now by the visitors who examine the remains of the canal and its ornate tunnel.

The letter makes it clear how much of an influence it was hoped that the canal would have on the country. Even with the many canals in existence or under construction at the time, the Thames was still the major transportation route in that part of England. The connection with the Severn meant easier and quicker

access to London and thus to overseas ports for goods originating in the west of the country. Even The Times referred to the canal as 'the grandest object ever attained by inland navigation'[3].

The opening of one canal, the Croydon Canal, was described fully in The Times of 27 October, 1809:

> On Monday last, the navigation of this Canal, from the Thames to the town of Croydon was opened. The proprietors . . . met at Sydenham and there embarked on one of the company's barges, which was handsomely decorated with flags, &c. At the moment of this barge's moving forward an excellent band played 'God save the King', and a salute of 21 guns was fired. The proprietors' barge then advanced, followed by a great many barges, loaded some of them with coals, others with stone, corn &c, &c. . . .
>
> The gay fleet of barges entered Penge Forest. The Canal passes through this forest in a part of it so elevated, that it affords the most extensive prospects, comprehending Beckenham, and several beautiful scattered villages and seats. . . .The proprietors found their calculations of profit irresistibly interrupted, by these rich prospects breaking upon them as they passed along, they were deprived of this grand scenery only by another, and no less gratification than of finding themselves gliding through the deepest recesses of the forest, where nothing met the eye but the elegant windings of the clear and still Canal, and its borders adorned by a profusion of trees. . . . When the Proprietors approached the basin at Croydon, they saw it surrounded by many thousands of persons, assembled to greet, with thanks and applause, those by whose patriotic perseverance so important a work had been accomplished. It is impossible to describe, adequately, the scene which presented itself, and the feelings which prevailed, when the Proprietors' barge was entering the basin, at which instant the band was playing 'God Save the King', the guns were firing, the bells of the churches were ringing; and this immense concourse of delighted persons were hailing by universal and hearty, and long continued shouts, the dawn of the commerce and prosperity.
>
> The following air, written by a Gentleman, while sailing to Croydon, was most zealously and ably sung by one of the Proprietors, Mr J. Walsh, and was received with great applause:

All hail this grand day when with gay colours flying,
The barges are seen on the current to glide,
When with fond emulation all parties are vying,
To make our Canal of Old England the pride.

CHORUS

Long down its fair stream may the rich vessel glide,
And the Croydon Canal be of England the pride.

And may it long flourish, while commerce caressing,
Adorns its gay banks with her wealth-bringing stores;
To Croydon, and all around the country a blessing,
May industry's sons ever thrive on its shores!

And now my good fellows sure nothing else is wanting
To heighten our mirth and our blessings to crown,
But with the gay belles on its banks to be flauting,
When spring smiles again on this high-favoured town.[4]

As mentioned above, there is a touch of levity in the description of the proprietors being distracted from their contemplation of potential profits. There may also be some cynicism or disillusionment present in the reporter's tone; this was 1809 and by now people had lost some of their first enthusiasm for canals and were aware of how much self-interest there was involved in the promotion and building of them.

Apart from this slightly suspect tone, the article is fairly straightforward; it describes the route of the boats and the subsequent official ceremony. No mention is made of the other celebrations that were no doubt also taking place amongst the workers and more boisterous locals but that is only to be expected; the paper's readers would not have been interested in knowing about these. The focus of the article is on improved trade prospects, and otherwise it carries over the gayness and jollity of the opening day.

As well as giving a clear idea of the procedure at an opening ceremony, this article is of value as it includes the song written for the occasion. Songs were not an uncommon method of celebrating an event; they were, after all, the literature of the working people. In his study on industrial songs in his book The Urban and Industrial Songs of the Black Country and Birmingham, Jon Raven writes that 'the opening of new canals, in the second half of the 18th[sic] century brought a crop of canal celebration songs extolling the virtues of canal transportation.'[5] This song differs from most of those written at that the time in that it was not composed by one of the 'people' but by a proprietor, presumably a man from the upper or upper middle classes. The style of the song reflects this, the language is more sophisticated than in the other ballads discussed below.

This circumstance is probably also responsible for what appears to be a patronizing tone to the song. The last stanza in particular has a definite air about it of the writer lowering himself on this occasion to be part of the masses. But he does not really forget that he is one of those who will make money directly from the canal, not just be indirectly affected by an improved local economy. This tone, if it was evident at the time, would not have been offensive to his audience as it would be today, as to be patronised was not then regarded as negatively as it is now.

Other songs written to celebrate canal openings have also been preserved. One of the earliest of these is "The New Navigation", by John Freeth, which was written in November 1769 upon the opening of Birmingham's first canal. Freeth was not a major literary figure but he was a 'prolific writer whose descriptive and social comments songs covered a wide range of topics though his favourite subject seems to have been the canals'.[6] He was a 'Birmingham publican, coffee house owner and poet'[7] who published some ballads in a collection entitled A Touch on the Times, being a collection of New Songs to old tunes, including some few which have appeared in former editions. By a Veteran in the class of political Ballad Street Scribblers,

> Who, when good news is brought to Town,
> Immediately to work sits down,
> And business fairly to go through,
> Writes Songs, finds Tunes, and sings them too.'[8]

Little more is known of him but in this book he says of himself: 'Throwing aside his weak, yet willing, efforts to please for the moment, and worn down by *thirty-six* years hard service in the humble station of a publican,

when in the best of his days he was not by nature fit for the task, at the age of *seventy-two* he feels himself far more inclined, over his cheering cup, with a social companion, to handle his pipe than his pen. . . . With hearty thanks to all his friends, and as a well-wisher to the prosperity of his native town, and the kingdom in general, he concludes his very brief and formal address,

> With hopes to pleasing scenes renew,
>
> That after times may soon ensue.
>
> J. FREETH.[9]

"The New Navigation", is full of praise for the canal and prophecies for its future, as one would expect.[10] There was money to be made from celebratory songs and it is even possible, though there is no evidence to support this theory, that Freeth was commissioned to write this song. More likely is the theory that he would have had the ballad printed on broadsheets and sold them at the ceremony and later. This does not mean that Freeth was mercenary, or wrote only what the public wanted to hear; he seems to have been genuinely enthusiastic on the subject of canals. It would, however, have been only natural for him to be sure that what he wrote responded to the public interest and was marketable.

The tone of the poem is one of jubilation and it seems possible that the song could have been sung at the opening ceremonies with the band playing and the proprietors going past on the official boat. There is no evidence of this happening on this occasion but we know from the account of the Croydon Canal above that it is possible. In A Social History of English Music, Mackerness notes that 'Bands of music were usually in attendance whenever newly constructed navigations were opened'[11] and the presence of a band suggests the possibility of a song.

The song was clearly written in the early period of both the Canal Age and the Industrial Revolution, at a time when Birmingham was coming into its own as a major manufacturing centre. The songwriter's enthusiasm is not reserved for the canal alone but extends to all things connected with Birmingham. The ballad does go beyond the Birmingham area, but only to disparage other places in comparison with the city and its new canal: 'Not Europe can match us for traffic, / America, Asia and Afric'[12]. The song gives a little detailed information of the different trades that will benefit: 'Birmingham toys all men praise', 'the best of wrought metals is Birmingham ware', and 'Since by the canal navigation, / Of coals we've the best in the nation'.

Clearly Freeth saw that the advantages from the canal were many and far reaching, and, according to Roy Palmer, 'Freeth was full of enthusiasm for the new canal and he wrote several other songs and odes about it.'[13]

"Grantham Navigation" is another fairly typical song written for the opening of a canal. It is in some ways very like "The New Navigation"; possibly there was a sort of unwritten formula to be followed when composing such songs. Both start with declaring an end to care and vexation, and go on to claim that the canal is better than having access to the well known navigable rivers, the Thames, the Trent and the Severn:

Come, since the day's for joy design'd,
Let all our cares be left behind,
And universal pleasure bind!
Adieu to all vexation;
No more let fears and doubts prevail,
Nor let our hopes or spirits fail,
For tho' we see not yet the sail,
We have the Navigation.

Let Thames, the Trent, the Severn too,
Each stream which in the world doth flow,
There various stores of traffic shew,
With envious exultation;
But now no more; their triumph vain,
This inland borough will maintain
Its fame, & still unrivall'd reign
Secure by Navigation.

("The New Navigation" also mentions the Avon; these verses can be compared with stanzas one and four of the"The New Navigation). Understandably, both songs mention the improved commerce that should come to the area, and they finish by drinking a toast to their respective new navigations. "Grantham Navigation"

differs, however, in one important and interesting aspect. The writer of this song does actually notice and mention the effect the canal will have on the poor people of the area:

> And thanks to Heav'n since 'tis perform'd,
> The poor will now be cloathed & warm'd,
> 'Gainst wintry winds and tempest arm'd,
> Snug in their habitation. . . . (Stanza 3).

> Who's then so blest, or so secure?
> We feed the hungry, cloath the poor. (Stanza 6).

No details are given of how their lives will be improved but at least it is shown that all will benefit from the canal, not just the merchants and manufacturers.

2. THE TENNANT CANAL

On the occasion of the opening of the Tennant canal in the Vale of Neath in 1824, poet and lollipop-shop keeper Elizabeth Davies wrote a poem to celebrate. I have been able to trace only five and a half verses of the nineteen this originally consisted of. The ballad gives the impression, as such ballads often do, that this canal was the best thing ever to happen to Neath:

> O! could I make verses with humour and wit,
> George Tennant, Esquire's great genius to fit;
> From morn until even, I would sit down and tell,
> And sing in the praise of the Neath Junction Canal.

> To his noble genius, great merit is due,
> The increase of traffic, he'll daily persue;
> Employ to poor Labourers, it is known full well,
> He gave them by making Neath Junction Canal.

. . .

But I think that my duty I do not fulfil
If I pass Mr Kirkhouse's very great skill,
He exerted his talents as wonder'lly well
In that great undertaking: Neath Junction Canal.

My song is ended and now I will rest,
In hopes Squire Tennant will ever be blest,
His goodness to the poor there is no tongue can tell,
Of his courage in making Neath Junction Canal.

I hope when he's dead and laid in his grave,
His soul will in heaven be eternally saved;
It will then be recorded for ages to tell,
Who was the great founder of Neath Junction Canal.[14]

George Tennant, who had the canal built, is given similar praise to that which was usually accorded to the Duke of Bridgewater. The engineer, Mr Kirkhouse, also receives praise but, as usual, the navigators who did the hard work do not seem to have been mentioned, although Tennant is awarded merit for having provided employment for them.

Two further lines of the ballad quoted by Rhys Phillips bring up a somewhat tenuous connection between the poet Southey and canals, to give further evidence of his interest in waterways generally. The lines in this poem are:

The stones that are in it are the best of all,
They came from the rock of Dylais water-fall.

for apparently 'when Captain Gronow, the Welsh Swordsman, accompanied the poet Southey on a house-hunting expedition up the Vale of Neath some years later, he was particularly severe on the act of vandalism by which Mr. George Tennant's quarrymen had "destroyed" the natural cascade of the Aberdulais.'[15] Elizabeth Davies was presumably able to overlook such vandalism in the light of the increased trade the canals would have brought to Neath; indeed financial consideration may have been a partial cause for her enthusiasm for the canal. This possibility is backed up by an address presented to George Tennant by the townsfolk of Neath on 12 October, together with a gold snuff-box:

> Sir, in the names and on the behalf of numerous Tradesmen in the Town of Neath and its vicinity, we wait upon you to request your acceptance of this Snuff Box. We offer it to you both as a tribute of our respect and as a testimonial of our gratitude for the benefits which you have already conferred upon this neighbourhood whilst engaged in the construction of the Neath and Swansea Junction Canal. We beg leave further to offer you our hearty congratulations upon you recent completion of so great an undertaking, and to express our sincere wishes that you may be blessed with health and length of days to enjoy the fruits of an Enterprize which cannot but prove eminently and permanently useful.[16]

It appears, however, that Elizabeth Davies also had another, more personal motive for her regard for the canal. Rhys Phillips quotes in full a letter from her to George Tennant, asking for permission to have her ballad printed. The grammar and spelling of this letter show that she was not a particularly well-educated woman but was probably still privileged compared to most women of the time. Her spelling is fairly consistent and it may be that some of it is phonetic. Her vocabulary is reasonable and she uses the words accurately, and words that she knew from her religious reading are more likely to spelled correctly, for instance, "scriptures", "creation", and "sacred". The letter begins:

> Most Worthy sir I hope that you will parden the liberty that I have taken in makin use of your name in these imperfect lines. I did not think that they would be notist but I was mistaken for the workin class of people is much pleased with them pertickely those in your employment feels gratefull that any small trybute is offered to the merit of thear employar

> they has a great decear to have them printed there is nothing in them but plain simple truty that sutes theyar taste and understanding better than the fine langwedge of the great athers I do not intend to print them without your aprabation sir if you object to the publishing of them they will be greatly disappointed for they all wishes to have copys of them sir I will intrude on you a little longar to let you now what created a desiar in me to compose these linds. (p. 705).

Elizabeth then relates how her father had planned to build a canal to avoid the tolls on the turnpike road on which the coal from his colliery was obliged to pass. He died before being able to put his plans into action. Elizabeth is therefore grateful to the man who fulfilled her father's dream:

> tho many years have past away sins the death of dear father when all was lost to us for ever but still I feeles a sacred achment to those plases that for so many year and likewise I feeles a very great to all the gentlemen that lays out theyar money for good of mankind in general in prefferanse to luxksery and disapation I hope they meet theyar reward it was that feeling with the butyfull seenarys that laid open to my [eyes] as I walked by the sid of the cannall to Swansea the ruins of old abby and a most butyfull rock that stands near the junction that rock drawd my atintion very much I felt then freat disias to befin then I have allways admird the butys of natuar I do sinserely feel a grateful hart to the grand maker of the univers for giving power and genias to man to imprave and butyfy the works of creation that it may be mor pleasing to the eys of the behoulder and to fullfill the scriptures that his eyes is over all his works a sparrow shall not fall to the ground without his notis most trustworthy sir I hope you will pleas to pardon the freedom of your humble and undfortunat servant Elizabeth Davies neath feb. 1, 1825.

Her comment on beautifying the works of creation is similar to some in The Fool of Quality, and is evidence of how religious imagery could be applied to such an earthly act as building a canal.

Although this is only a small fragment of the original ballad, from it and the accompanying letter, one can gather a great deal about what a canal could mean to those whose lives it affected. Elizabeth Davies may

not be a typical canal admirer but the different aspects of her story are probably typical to different groups of people and reflect the way canals affected the lives of the people who came into contact with them.

3. THE CALEDONIAN CANAL

Robert Southey's interest in canals can be traced through the stages from the construction stage through to the established period, but it reaches a peak with the opening of the Caledonian Canal. To celebrate this occasion, he chose to write a set of poems on the subject. His "Inscriptions on the Caledonian Canal" are an important poetic statements on canals. They were written by someone who not only had some knowledge and previous interest in the subject, but who had watched the development of this particular canal and knew it well. Unlike the usual writers of canal celebratory songs, Southey was not interested in the profit to be made from the canal (as a government sponsored project in any case there was no personal profit to be made), but saw the broader benefits to be gained from this new avenue across the Highlands of Scotland. Also, unlike most others, Southey's poem was not left to find its own way through time; having been Poet Laureate, his writings were probably nearly all preserved. But more importantly, these particular verses were noticed because they were inscribed in stone at points along the canal and so doubly preserved.

The "Inscriptions" is divided into three sections; each section covers a different aspect of the canal and is set at a different place. The first, "At Clachnacaharry", covers the planning of the canal, the reasons for building it, and the benefits it will bring:

in the Georgian age

This mighty work was plann'd, which should unite
The lakes, control the innavigable streams,
And through the bowels of the land deduce
A way, where vessels which must else have braved
The formidable Cape, and have essayed
The perils of the Hyperborean Sea,
Might from the Baltic to the Atlantic deep
Pass and repass at will. So when the storm
Careers abroad, may they securely here,

Through birchen groves, green fields, and pastoral hills,

Pursue their voyage home.[17]

This was the first element of the canal. It was not built to bring profit to anyone, as most canals in England were; it was intended to provide a quicker and safer route than around the top of Scotland, in order to improve trade generally. Set at the physical beginning of the canal, the poem talks of the beginning of the canal, and what changes it would bring. Although Southey was not concerned with financial gain, the profit motive is not overlooked; there would have been some opposition to the funding of this canal and presumably Southey is answering this. He also does not fail to appeal to the patriotism of the people; this poem is unusual in mentioning the war, which, in one form or another, Britain was involved in from 1793 to 1815 (there was peace between 1802 and 1803), and to make it an extra cause of praise that this canal should be built over such a trying time:

Humanity

May boast this proud expenditure, begun

By Britain in a time of arduous war;

Through all the efforts and emergencies

Of that long strife continued, and achieved

After her triumph, even at the time

When national burdens bearing on the state

Were felt with heaviest pressure. Such expense

Is best economy. In growing wealth,

Comfort, and spreading industry, behold

The fruits immediate!

Although this is only the opening of the canal, in 1822, already, claims Southey, the benefits of the canal are evident. These would be due not only to increased industry in the area, but also to the employment provided by the building of the canal.

The second section of the poem, "At Fort Augustus", is the longest one, and this reveals where Southey's strongest interest lay. It covers the course of the canal and the building of it, the technical feats that went into the construction of this route from sea to sea, the joining of locks and rivers to make a through passage. For while Southey is enthusiastic about the natural landscape of the Highlands and uses the majesty of them in this poem, it is the improvements that have been made to nature that draw his attention:

> Not from the bowels of the land alone,
> From lake and stream hath their diluvial wreck
> Been scoop'd to form this navigable way;
> Huge rivers were controll'd, or from their course
> Shoulder'd aside; and at the eastern mouth,
> Where the salt ooze denied a resting place
> There were the deep foundations laid, by weight
> On weight immersed, and pile on pile down-driven,
> Till steadfast as the everlasting rocks,
> The massive outwork stands.

It is impressed upon the reader just what a massive undertaking this was, and what difficulties had to be got through. Once again the good the canal will bring is emphasised, making all the work and expense worth while:

> Contemplate now
> What days and nights of thought, what years of toil,
> What inexhaustive springs of public wealth
> The vast design required; the immediate good,
> The future benefit progressive still;
> And thou wilt pay thy tribute of due praise
> To those whose counsels, whose decrees, Whose care,
> For after ages formed the generous work.

Southey also describes the journey of a boat going through the canal, how it ascends and descends through the locks and lochs along its path. This is also unusual for a canal opening song, because usually only the boat's arrival in the main centre on the canal is mentioned. This poem is different in that it takes general view of the canal and sees all that it is, that it will do, and does not just concentrate on the more mercenary facets of it, though these are not forgotten. On the whole Southey sees the canal as something much more than a simple means of transport, it is, even in this late stage in the Canal Age, an innovation, a new direction for canals. It is, of course, a ship canal, designed to take much larger boats than those which could fit on the standard British narrow canal, and if its example had been followed more widely it could have saved England's canals. As it was, even the Caledonian Canal was not a success, as by the time it was finished changes in ships and shipping had rendered it almost obsolete.

The third section of the poem, "At Banavie", is devoted to Thomas Telford, the engineer responsible for the canal. It has already been made obvious that Southey had a great deal of respect for Telford; indeed Southey saw him as a hero of his time, a man whose every work stood as a monument to him:

> Telford it was, by whose presiding mind
> The whole great work was plann'd and perfected;
> Telford, who o'er the vale of Cambrian Dee,
> Aloft in air, at giddy height upborne,
> Carried his navigable road, and hung
> High o'er Menai's straits the bending bridge;
> Structures of more ambitious enterprize
> Than minstrels in the age of old romance
> To their own Merlin's magic lore ascribed.
> Nor hath he for his native land perform'd
> Less in this proud design; and where his piers
> Around her coast from many a fisher's creek
> Unshelter'd else, and many an ample port,
> Repel the assailing storm; and where his roads

In beautiful and sinuous line far seen,

Wind with the vale, and win the long ascent,

Now o'er the deep morass sustain'd, and now

Across ravine, or glen, or estuary,

Opening a passage through the wilds subdued.

Here Southey is drawing attention to Telford's other great constructions, the Pontcysyllte aqueduct over the Dee in Wales, and the bridge at Menai, both noted engineering feats of the day, and sees the Caledonian Canal as yet further proof of this man's genius.

The verses may not be a literary masterpiece, and Burton may be right in saying that the canal itself is 'a far worthier memorial to the engineer'[18], however they are an indication of just how important the opening of a canal could be even to someone with no direct involvement with it. The opening of any canal was important to the area it was in. First, it meant the end of the nuisance caused by the presence of the navigators; this was probably reason enough for celebrating for many of the locals. But more importantly, it meant the beginning of a new era for all those whose lives would be affected by the new canal. They would have better and cheaper supplies of coal, fertilisers for their land, the material to build new roads so giving them another improved method of transportation; all these things resulted in a generally more comfortable lifestyle. There were also more jobs, both working directly with the canals, and as a consequence of the possibilities for trade which they brought.

There were also disappointments; not all canals were as successful as they were intended to be. It is unlikely that even the most frequently used and profitable canal could do as much for its region as was sometimes promised, and high hopes may have been placed on canals to bring changes that were not possible in the economic conditions of the time. Certainly, after the opening ceremony not much is heard of many of the canals; presumably they continued operating, paying out modest, or even quite substantial dividends to the shareholders, or maybe running at a loss for a while to the displeasure of the speculators who were hoping to make money from them. But the public then were not so different from the way they are today; they didn't really want to hear about quiet success, they were only interested in big events, and canals did not often provide these.

Interest in canals did not drop away altogether after they opened; those who had developed a real enthusiasm for the subject continued to notice and comment on them, and there were other converts. But there

would not be the interest that the first three stages inspired until enthusiasts started rebuilding canals in the 1960s.

NOTES

1 Humphrey Household, The Thames and Severn Canal (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1969), pp. 68-69. This letter is quoted from Moreau, A Tour to Cheltenham Spa, seventh ed. 1793, pp. 158-9.

2 Household, pp. 204-205, note 58.

3 Household, p. 68.

4 Roy Palmer, Strike the Bell: Transport by Road, Canal, Rail and Sea in the Nineteenth Century through Songs, Ballads and Contemporary Accounts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p.19.

5 Jon Raven, The Urban and Industrial Songs of the Black Country and Birmingham (Wolverhampton: Broadside, 1977), p. 44.

6 Raven, Urban and Industrial Songs, p. 220.

7 Raven, Urban and Industrial Songs, p. 44.

8 W. H. Logan, A Pedlar's Pack of Ballads and Songs (Edinburgh: William Paterson, 1869), p. 199.

9 Logan, pp. 199-200.

10 This ballad, and all others not quoted in full in the text are included and referenced in the appendix.

11 E. D. Mackerness, A Social History of English Music (London; Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), p. 132.

12 From A Warwickshire Medley, 1780, written by John Freeth. In Raven, Urban and Industrial Songs, pp. 220-221. The ballad is quoted fully in the appendix.

13 Roy Palmer, A Touch on the Times: Songs of Social Change, 1770-1914, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Education, 1972), p. 29.

14 Quoted in D. Rhys Phillips, The History of the Vale of Neath (Swansea: by the author, 1925), p. 335. The ballad presumably came off a broadsheet, written at the bottom of it in Phillips is '*Neath*, March 1, 1824. Elizabeth Davies.'

15 Rhys Phillips, p. 335.

16 Quoted in Rhys Phillips, p. 338

17 The poem is quoted in full and referenced in the Appendix.

18 Burton, The Canal Builders, p. 123.

It was not long after the first canals were completed before they became an accepted and established part of the English countryside. So much so, in fact, that they seemed to disappear from the sight of most of those who were writing at the time. This was nothing new; we have already seen that canals did not enter the consciousness of writers at most stages of their existence. But it is perhaps more surprising at this stage as there were a number of aspects of them which would not have been an embarrassment to those outside them but would have actually been useful to them. Some writers were aware of this and in their thoughts or travels did take note of the prosperity canals brought, or the improved travelling conditions. In order, however, to find out what the lives of those who actually worked on the canals were like it is necessary, once again, to examine the songs and ballads of the era, for they were the voice of the boatpeople as well as of the navigators.

1. OUTSIDE VIEWS

In at least two of the main forms of literature towards the end of the eighteenth century, novels and travel stories, it seems reasonable to expect that the revolution in transport brought about by the building of canals would have a significant place. But this is not the case. It is rare to find mention of canals in novels of this period, and only slightly more common in travel books. Rarer still are accounts of actual journeys by canal, and missing altogether is any mention of the people who worked on and ran the canals — even amongst the ballads information on the boatpeople is scarce. Neither canals nor people really started to make an appearance until towards the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, when writers began to discover the possibilities of canals and their potential as a setting.

i. The Canals

The almost total absence of even the slightest mention of canals in novels of this period can be partially explained by one fact, that only those members of the general public who had some connection with a canal were at all interested in them, and novelists, and their audiences, were not strongly represented among this group. Lack of interest on their part is likely to have resulted in them not even noticing the presence of a canal when they passed by one, much as many travellers of today in England drive by, over, and under canals every day without ever realising they are there. One example of a novel displaying this selective blindness is Pride and Prejudice. Although Jane Austen was brought up in a country with an ever-growing number of canals and must have seen them or heard about them occasionally, they are never referred to in her novels. One would, in fact, be surprised to find mention of them, because they are not the sort of thing young women, like Jane

Austen and her heroines, would have any interest in or know anything about. And so, in Pride and Prejudice, when Elizabeth is on her journey north with her Aunt and Uncle they travel through or near Birmingham, a city riddled with canals, but no description is given, not of the canals, nor of any of the features of the city. Instead the journey is passed over with this explanation:

> It is not the object of this work to give a description of Derbyshire, nor of any of the remarkable places through which their route thither lay; Oxford, Blenheim, Warwick, Kenelworth, Birmingham &c. are sufficiently known. A small part of Derbyshire is all the present concern.[1]

Facts and description of this sort have no place in Austen's novels, unless they are important to the plot. And canals would never be important in an Austen novel or in any other novel of the period. They were not part of Jane Austen's life, nor of the lives of any other novelists. The 'practical monopoly of the novel' which women had at this time[2] means that many novels of this period were written for, and sometimes by, young women with little education but a taste for romance. Canals were not romantic, they were too prosaic, and too much associated with the working class. Also, neither the writers nor the readers knew anything of canals. It is interesting to note that the novels which do mention canals are written by men, but even in these few they are not given a large role to play. One might expect to find canals in some of the radical novels of the time, such as William Godwin's Caleb Williams, or Robert Bage's Hermsprong, but the characters in these novels also are satisfied to travel by coach, horseback, or, when they wish to show they are not interested in status, on foot.

The few references to canals which do appear in novels are, all but one, by one man, Thomas Love Peacock, an author to whom various connections with canals can be traced. One of his novels, Crotchet Castle, even includes a journey taken on a canal (this is discussed below, p.104.ff). In his other novels Peacock has generally provided his characters with coaches when they travelled but they tend to be talkative people and the subject of canals does crop up. On a coach journey in Headlong Hall canals are mentioned, but it is the subject of coach travel which generates the conversation:

> The conversation among these illuminati soon became animated; and Mr Foster . . . took occasion to panegyrize the vehicle in which they were then travelling, and observed

> what remarkable improvements had been made in the means of facilitating intercourse between distant parts of the kingdom: he held forth with great energy on the subject of roads and railways, canals and tunnels, manufactures and machinery: 'In short,' said he, 'everything we look on attests the progress of mankind in all the arts of life, and demonstrates their gradual advancement towards a state of unlimited perfection.'
>
> Mr Escot . . . took up the thread of the discourse, observing, that the proposition just advanced seemed to him perfectly contrary to the true state of the case: 'for,' said he, 'these great improvements, as you call them, appear to me only so many links in the great chain of corruption, which will soon fetter the whole human race in irreparable slavery and incurable wretchedness'.[3]

Not only does this passage show that Peacock was conscious of the improvements which had been made to means of travel, it is also an indication of Peacock's own attitude towards canals. Evidence indicates that he held similar opinions to both Foster and Escot on the subject of 'improvements' such as canals. He was aware of their merits, both aesthetic and practical, but on other occasions he comments on them, and on the Thames and Severn Canal in particular, in a different tone. A series of letters written by him when on a trip to trace the source of the Thames reveals his attitude. From Cricklade he wrote:

> Several streams unite here: the natives are not agreed which is the Thames; they are the most perfect set of Vandals I ever met. In their vulgar ideas, the canal is the most interesting object.[4]

Compared with the trickle of water the Thames becomes at this point, one cannot help but feel the 'natives' were in the right here. Further search leads Peacock to Thames Head, 'a flat spring, in a field about a mile from Tarlton, lying close to the banks of the Thames and the Severn canal. The spring, in the summer months, is totally dry'. The reason for this, he explains, is that there is a pump situated there to draw water up into the canal (the Thames and Severn always had a notorious water supply problem). 'Reflecting upon this intrusion of man into nature, he comes to the conclusion that "the Thames is almost as good a subject for a satire as a panegyric"':

> A satirist might exclaim, "the rapacity of commerce, not content with the immense advantages derived from this river in a course of nearly three hundred miles, erects a ponderous engine upon the very place of its nativity, to suck up its unborn waters from the bosom of the earth, and pump them into a navigable canal. . . .
>
> A panegyrist, on the contrary, after expatiating on the benefits of commercial navigation, might say, "And yet this splendid undertaking would be incomplete, did not this noble river, this beautiful emblem and powerful instrument of commercial greatness of Britain, contribute to that greatness even at the instant of its birth, by supplying this magnificent chain of connection with the means of perpetual utility.[5]

That Peacock is able to compose this debate suggests that he sees both sides of this question and is himself unsure whether canals are a good thing or not. Felix Felton remarks that 'to Peacock, canals were a symptom of the new age' and quotes him as remarking that, 'there are no Naiads in the Regent's Park-canal'.[6] But for all that, Peacock was fond of walking by the canal, an exercise he shared with Shelley according to his Memoirs of Percy Bysshe Shelley in which he writes of 'walking together on the bank of the Surrey Canal, and discoursing on Wordsworth'.[7] He also makes a comment that indicates his appreciation of the physical appearance of canals:

> The canal in question was a favourite walk with us. The Croydon Canal branched off from it, and passed very soon into wooded scenery. The Croydon Canal is extinct, and has given place to the, I hope, more useful, but certainly less picturesque, railway. Whether the Surrey exists, I do not know. He [Shelley] had a passion for sailing paper-boats, which he indulged on this canal, and on the Serpentine river.[8]

This ambiguity in his own feelings on canals could help explain the way he uses them in his novels.

Most of Peacock's novels make some reference to canals. This may be reflective of the fact that he was writing towards the end of the canal period and beyond, but it also seems to indicate a personal interest in the subject. Comments such as 'The canal that does not overflow in the season of rain will not be navigable in the season of drought' (an example given by Mr Fax of how 'the waste of plenty is the resource of scarcity' in

Melincourt)[9] are not remarkable in themselves but are noticeable in that they show a familiarity with the subject of canals not seen in most authors of the period and which are more like passages in Victorian novels such as those of Elizabeth Gaskell.

The only other novelist of the Canal Age who has noticed canals at all is Tobias Smollett. His reference to canals is slight but there may be more behind it than first appears. When the travellers in Humphrey Clinker are in Glasgow, Matt Bramble writes to Dr Lewis that 'the merchants of Glasgow have determined to make a navigable canal betwixt the two Firths which will be of incredible advantage to their commerce, in transporting merchandize from one side of the island to the other.'[10] (This is the Forth and Clyde canal which was proposed three times, in 1762, 1764, and again in 1764, before it was built). It is remarkable enough that characters in a novel have taken note of a fact like that, but it is made more interesting by a later comment which Matt Bramble, again in a letter to Dr Lewis, makes:

> I am much pleased with Manchester, which is one of the most agreeable and flourishing towns in Great Britain; and I perceive that this is the place which hath animated the spirit and suggested the chief manufactures of Glasgow. (p. 312).

Although Matt Bramble does not mention canals in this comment to Dr Lewis, one of the reasons that Manchester was flourishing at that time was its canal system, and it is likely that this had influenced the merchants in Glasgow. It is possible that Smollet was aware of such a connection and using it to add authenticity to his novel.

Other information on interest in and attitudes to canals comes from the writings of people who encountered them on their travels. One writer who had virtually nothing good to say about artificial waterways was William Cobbett. His opposition to them is, however, an indication of how effective they were at doing the job for which they were designed. If they had not been successful then Cobbett would not have been led to make these comments in his Rural Rides:

> Devises[sic] is, as nearly as possible, in the centre of the county, and the *canal*, that passes close by it, is the great channel through which the produce of the country is carried away to

be devoured by the idlers, the thieves, and the prostitutes, who *all* tax-eaters, in the WENS of Bath and London.[11]

I saw in *one single farmyard here* more food than enough for four times the inhabitants of the parish; and this yard did not contain a tenth, perhaps, of the produce of the parish; but while the poor creatures that raise the wheat and the barley and cheese and the mutton and the beef are living upon potatoes, an accursed *canal* comes kindly through the parish to convey away the wheat and all the *good food* to the tax-eaters and their attendants in the WEN! What, then, is this *'an improvement'*, is a nation the *richer* for the carrying away of the food from those who raise it, and giving it to *bayonet men* and others, who are assembled in great masses? I could broomstick the fellow who would look me in the face and call this *'an improvement'*. What! was it not better for the consumers of the food *to live near to the places where it was grown?* We have very nearly come to the system of HINDOOSTAN, where the farmer is allowed by the AUMIL, or tax-contractor, only so much of the produce of his farm to eat in the year! The thing is not done is so undisguised a manner here; here are *assessor, collector, exisemen, supervisor, informer, constable, justice, sheriff, jailor, judge, jury, jack-ketch, barrack-man.* Here is a great deal of ceremony about it, all is done *according to law;* it is the *free-est* country in the world: but, some how or other, the produce is, at last, *carried away;* and it is eaten, for the most part, by those who do not work.

(page 363).

When Cobbett did make a comment that was not outright negative about canals, it is difficult not to scent sarcasm. The following comment, for instance, is suggestive when read in conjunction with the previous quote:

Just before we got to SWINDON, we crossed a *canal* at a place where there is a wharf and a coal-yard, and close by these a gentleman's house,with coach-house, stable, walled-in garden, paddock *orné*, and the rest of those things, which, all together, make up *a villa,* surpassing the second and approaching towards the first class. Seeing a man in the courtyard, I asked him to what gentleman the house belonged: 'to the *head un* o' the canal,' said he. And, when, upon further inquiry of him, I found that it was the villa of the chief

> manager, I could not help congratulating the proprietors of this aquatic concern; for, though I did not ask the name of the canal, I could readily suppose, that the profits must be prodigious, when the residence of the manager would imply no disparagement of dignity, if occupied by a Secretary of State for the Home, or even for the Foreign department.
>
> (page 409).

One can be fairly sure that Cobbett did not approve of the large profits the canal company was obviously making, for he would see this as a direct result of depriving people in rural areas of their rights. It was unfortunately the case that, as Eric Hobsbawn points out, that 'for every village which specialised in manufactures, every rural area which became an industrial village area (like the black country, the mining regions, and most of the textile regions), implied some other zone which specialised in selling it the food it no longer produced.'[12] This also meant that the means of transport had to be available to supply this food, and if canals had not been there to do so, some other method would have been found. It is, therefore, a little unfair of Cobbett to blame the canals for providing a solution to a problem created by the Industrial Revolution generally.

Thomas Pennant was one traveller who had only good to say about the canals. In The Journey from Chester to London he mentions every canal he passes by, and there are many of them. As well as noticing the canals themselves, he also noticed the benefits they had brought to the countryside around them:

> NOTWITHSTANDING the clamors which were raised against this undertaking, in the places through which it was intended to pass, when it was first projected, we have the pleasure now to see content reign universally on its banks, and plenty attend its progress. The cottage, instead of being half-covered with miserable thatch, is now secured with a substantial covering of tiles or slates, brought from the distant hills of *Wales* or *Cumberland*. The fields, which before were barren, are now drained, and, by the assistance of manure, conveyed on the canal toll-free, are cloathed with a beautiful verdure. Places which rarely knew the use of coal, are plentifully supplied with that essential article upon reasonable terms; and, what is of still greater public utility, the monopolizers of corn are prevented from exercising their infamous trade; for, by the communication being opened between

> *Liverpool, Bristol,* and *Hull,* and the line of the canal being through countries abundant in grain, it affords a conveyance for corn unknown to past ages.[13]

This passages shows Pennant's interest in the effects of canals, but he was also interested in the statistics of them. Not only does he describe the appearance of the canals he passes but in some cases he also gives details of their lengths, widths, depths, and rises or falls.[14]

The Rev Stebbing Shaw, whose interest in canals has already been noted with his visits to some construction sites, also mentioned them in a more scholarly work, The History and Antiquities of Staffordshire. The Grand Trunk is the canal which draws his attention here, and reveals that he too saw the beauty of them as well as their usefulness;

> Along the North side of the hill, below, midway betwixt the church and the river, . . . amidst woods and rocks, now runs the Grand Trunk canal, resounding daily with the clamour of sturdy bargemen, and the bustling sons of commerce.[15]

> In the present auspicious reign, nothing so remarkably presents itself as the rise and progress of the numerous manufactures in this county, and those great inlets of commerce navigable canals. We see at once artificial rivers carried over rivers and under mountains, particularly the Grand-trunck[sic], that great effort of the immortal Brindley, which has been the admiration of the curious. (page 86)

Obviously Shaw, as well as Pennant, had a previously developed interest in canals or he would not have noticed and mentioned them in the way he did.

Other travellers went by routes that would have taken them near as many canals as Thomas Pennant, but they did not react the same way. John Byng, for instance, toured in the Midlands on a couple of occasions but although he noticed the canals and mentioned their presence, he did not have much to say about them.. His comments are generally brief and to the point; however he did have a tendency to see towns with a canal in them as 'Dutch-looking' or 'Dutch like'.[16] Sylas Neville likewise mentioned canals when he saw them but only made brief references such as 'in the same stage passed under one of the aqueduct bridges of the canal between

___Ferry and Runcorn'.[17] Both of these published diaries are strongly edited and it is possible that, having noticed that much of canals, Byng or Neville may have had more to say on the subject somewhere that has not been included in these editions. Without access to the originals of works such as these it is impossible to say how many useful references to canals there may have been in them and in other journals of the day. Any work edited before the canal revival of the mid-twentieth century, or even after them by someone with no interest in waterways, will suffer from that lack of interest in editor as well as possibly in writer.

There are some songs which make a passing reference to canals; these are useful in indicating society's attitude to them and showing what interest they generated amongst the lower classes. For example, there are three songs which mention canals amongst other examples of new-fangled things or improvements, "Humphrey Hardfeatures' Description of Cast-Iron Inventions", "Bubbles of 1825", and "Manchester's Improving Daily".[18] None of these reveal a particular interest in canals, but indicate that they were part of daily life for people in contact with them. The first song is from the early eighteen-twenties, clearly a time when cast-iron was beginning to become widely used. It lists a multitude of serious and humorous uses for cast-iron, as seen in the first stanza:

> Since cast-iron has got all the rage,
> And scarce anything's now made without it;
> As I live in this cast-iron age,
> I mean to say something about it.
> There's cast-iron coffins and carts,
> There's cast-iron bridges and boats,
> Corn-factors with cast-iron hearts,
> That I'd hang up in cast-iron coats.[19]

The bridges and boats are not exclusively associated with canals but there were attempts at cast-iron narrowboats, and canals such as the one at Stratford still display their original cast-iron bridges.

"Bubbles of 1825" is described by Roy Palmer as 'an artful mixture of developments which were already in progress at the time of writing, and what no doubt seemed fanciful speculation on future technology. As with most science fiction of yesteryear (and no doubt of today), hindsight reveals it to be a combination of

nonsense and acute perception."[20] It presents the kind of speculative atmosphere that was later described by Dickens in Little Dorritt, and foresees similar consequences. Like "Manchester's Improving Daily" (1830), this song was written after the early days of canal mania and narrow canals had by this stage become an accepted part of the landscape. The future prospects are of ship canals; although being proposed at the time, the Manchester Ship Canal was not built until much later in the century. Some of the other projects mentioned in the song were later to materialise as the Panama Canal and the Channel Tunnel.

The Manchester song details a number of recent improvements to the city and brings in a traditional ballad figure from earlier in the Industrial Age, Oldham Jone. Railways may not have reached Manchester but they are on the way, and looked forward to, by the writer of this song at any rate. But canals are not forgotten, although once again it is a ship canal that is referred to:

This Manchester's a rare fine place,
  For trade and other such like movements;
What town can keep up such a race,
  As ours has done for prime improvements
For of late what sights of alterations,
Both streets and buildings changing stations,
That country folks, as they observe us,
Cry our, 'Laws! pickle and presarve us!'
    Sing hey, sing ho, sing hey down gaily,
    Manchester's improving daily.

Once Oldham Jone, in his smock frock,
  I'th town stop'd late one afternoon, sir,
And staring at th' infirmary clock,
  Said, Wounds, that must be th' harvest moon, sir;
And ecod, it's fix'd fast up i'th' place there,
And stands behind that nice clock-face there:
Well, this caps aw, for I'll be bound, sir,

They mak' it shine there aw th' year round, sir.

Sing hey, etc.

. . .

Thas as improvements on we go,

We're ever trying at invention;

New objects starting up to view,

And catching all our spare attention:

Then the ship canal, and all such schemes, sir,

Tho' some may call them fancy's dreams, sir,

They'll all succeed, you need not fret, sir,

As soon as John Bull's out of debt, sir.

Sing hey, etc.[21]

Another song which mentions a canal is "Parody on the Rose-bud of Summer"[22]. It belongs to a group of songs which list a number of (supposedly) impossible events which would have to come about before something will happen (usually, as in this case, the 'something' is concerned with love). A comparison of this song with "Then my Love and I'll be Married"[23] shows the difference between it and the songs normally written in this manner. "Then my Love" is an anti-love song, as the impossible has to happen before the marriage; the images it uses are also quite different, being much more everyday objects and sights. Half the allusions are visions of pleasant objects, such as 'When roses grow on thistle tops' but others are not as romantic and reveal an anti-feminist bias, for example, And women can't eat sugar sops'. The images in the "Parody on the Rose-Bud of Summer" show a similar juxtaposition of romantic and concrete, with the first verse containing nature imagery and the second concentrating on industrial images. This ballad is quite late in the Canal Age (it can not be dated accurately but one printing of it was done around 1838 so it may actually date from after the Canal Age) but it reveals not only that canals were still being noticed by some people, but that by

this time they were considered to be something so necessary and permanent that the thought of the Grand Junction ceasing to flow is unbelievable.

Jon Raven comments on another group of canal songs: 'During the late 18th century plans to make various inland towns and cities 'canal seaports' sparked off a crop of songs. Some of these appeared on broadsides and, with small changes, were used for widely separated towns: "When Birmingham is a Seaport Town" is found in versions from Leeds and Manchester as well as Birmingham.'[24] The Birmingham and Leeds songs discussed are indeed very similar. "On Leeds Becoming on Sea-Port Town" is evidently a later version printed in the 1850s as it refers to the Great Exhibition of 1851. The reference is likely to have been an attempt at making the ballad more topical at the time and the line was probably changed from one similar to that in the Birmingham version, for example, 'To Leeds town there is news come down, sirs,' instead of 'From the Exhibition I've brought news down, sirs'. Other changes also indicate an updating in the Leeds song, such as the line 'Then 'stead of weavers, spinners and tailors,' which becomes 'Then instead of Factories and cheap tailors'. Most of the other changes are made to accommodate the change of setting; the Exchange becomes the town-hall and the Temperance Hall becomes Vicars Croft. One puzzling line change is to 'And old maids with money as rusty as bacon.' This line may have been brought about by the song being orally transmitted as in itself it does not make much sense. The line in the Birmingham song, 'Then all will feed on eggs and bacon' is more likely, for even if "money as rusty as bacon" was an authentic saying prevalent at this time (for which I can find no evidence), it still does not make sense in this context where the rest of the verse is recounting the "fun" that will be done when the city 'is a sea-port town'.

The songs have a basically humorous attitude, foreseeing a number of odd or unlikely events that would occur if the town were to be connected to the sea by canal. The enthusiasm of the earlier canal mania is repeated here when we are told that 'the town will be all joy and delight' and once again the emphasis is placed on trade prospects and economic improvement, for example: 'Such lots of goods the boats will bring up, / Storerooms will like mushrooms spring up' and: 'In time you will have trade enough, sirs, / Over the world you'll send your stuff, sirs'. This enthu siasm may not be entirely sincere, however, as we are told that "They'll cover the bridge with touts and prigs, sirs,' and in return for the practical items, coals, cabbages and carrots, which are to be exported, the objects to be received are a group of animals, all with element of foolishness to them: 'poll parrots, / Baboons, racoons and Spanish donkeys, / Jays, cockatoos, and ring tailed monkeys.' The song goes on to the absurdity of running ships 'about the streets like coaches, / Over the marshes, stones or

gorses, / Tars for jarvies, whales for horses'. On the positive side, the work-house would be converted in a store room, perhaps implying that there will be no need for it anymore; and some would have been relieved to see the Temperance Hall become a pig-sty!

Speculation was the subject of a song by John Freeth, in which canals feature. The song, "Speculation on the Present Day" begins:

In this busy wrangling age,
Full of fraud and dissipation,
Gaming is the public rage,
All seem fond of speculation.

In the funds we every day,
See some kind of fluctuation;
Go as may the mind astray,
There's no check to speculation.

Gambling's grown to such a pitch,
In all quarters of the nation,
Some get poor, and other's rich,
By mere daily speculation.

Wheat and barley, oats and hops,
Come in common circulation;
Small if should be found the crops,
Greater then the speculation.

Many in this world of strife,
Oft have made this observation,
In the articles of life,
That there's too much speculation."

Some for copper, some for brass
Coals and timber - but the fashion,
Which all others did surpass,
Once was inland navigation.[25]

The song continues to mention many other forms of speculation but it is clear that, at its peak, canal investment was very popular, and probably not surpassed until the railway mania of the Victorian period. Although many people may not have known much about canals themselves, they would have heard of the speculation they attracted, and this was probably not forgotten quickly, especially as people were receiving the profits, or paying out if the canal took a long time to finish, on shares for many years. For instance, in Mrs Gaskell's novel Ruth, Mr Benson, the dissenting minister, and his sister 'had about thirty or forty pounds coming in annually from a sum which, in happier days, Mr Bradshaw had invested in Canal shares for them'.[26] Others were less fortunate; Arthur Young noted in his Tours of England and Wales that 'shares in this [the Oxford] canal, for want of water, were down to £60 and even £50. This was pretty loss to adventurers, sinking half their capitals, because these canal projectors, who never see any other difficulties than that of getting people's money, are mistaken in their calculations.'[27]

Young was a supporter of canals, however, and often mentioned canals in his books, usually in a complimentary fashion, as when he visited Birmingham:

> The capital improvement wrought since I was here before is the canal to Oxford, Coventry, Wolverhampton, etc.; the port, as it may be called, or double canal head in the town crowded with coal barges is a noble spectacle, with that prodigious animation which that immense trade of this place could alone give. . . . Coals, before these canals were made, were 6d per cwt. at Birmingham, now 4 1/2d. The consumption is about 200,000 tons a year, which exhausts about 20 or 22 acres; it employs 40 boats, each 20 ton a day for the six summer months, besides 15-20 boats to Oxford, a new supply since the new cut. . . .

> These immense works, which wear so animated a face of business, corres-pond well with the prodigious increase of the town.[28]

Like Pennant, Young has done his research and presents statistics about the canals to convince his readers of the importance and usefulness of them.

There were many different aspects of canals which drew comment from people when they encountered them. Some were interested in their commercial use, others in the improvements they brought to the surrounding countryside, and others noticed the improvement in lifestyle they brought to the poor, both in the towns and in rural areas. Not all comments were positive, nor were they all serious, as some writers saw the enthusiasm for canals as, at best, laughable, at worst, destructive.

ii. Canal Travel

From the early days of the Canal Age it was possible for passengers to make a journey along some of the canals. Packet boats were quite a profitable venture and therefore must have been well patronized, however only a few accounts of journeys on them can be found. Also rare are accounts of pleasure trips in private boats, although the possibility of these was mentioned in canal pamphlets and other promotional material and must surely have been taken up by some people. From the sources that are available, however, it seems that quite a mixture of people did use public transport on canals, and fortunately some did describe their journeys.

There is one factor which may account for the absence of canal travel in novels. This is that even at this early stage in the evolution of the novel, travel in novels, as in life, was almost always done by coach. Percy Adams points out in his book Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel that 'as early prose fiction was evolving, public stagecoaches and coach travel in general were evolving with it. The new novel, then, could hardly have avoided making artistic use of the stagecoach.'[29] Thus the absence of canal travel in novels is explained more by reference to the popularity of the coach than the unpopularity of the canal trip boat.

The connection of carriages with novels is an important one and one which continued to the railway age and beyond. Its main period, however, was the same as the canal age and this probably accounts for the failure of authors of the day to use canals as a means of transport for their characters. John A. Dussinger, in his article '"The Glory of Motion": Carriages and Conscious ness in the Early novel', refers to the period as a time

> when the carriage helped to render consciousness in the novel, a period that had to wait centuries for the combined improvement in carriage design, horse breeding, and road building to alleviate the hardships of overland travel. This technological breakthrough in transportation occurs during the latter decades of the eighteenth century and thus forms a material basis for the so-called Age of Sensibility, when self is felt to be a phenomenon of the nervous system, of the body in motion, In English fiction it is apparently Sterne's narratives that first identify consciousness with the kinetic vehicle and set the pattern for countless novelists since the nineteenth century who use the carriage as a metonym of character as well as for modern film-makers who continually rely on the automobile for a trope.[30]

This does not explain why it was the the carriage that was invested with all this meaning when the canal and the trip boat were being developed at the same time. But the reason may be that the carriages did have a chronological advantage here. Although roads were poor and frequently impassable, they had always been there and were a reminder that they could, theoretically, provide a path in any direction. Although rivers had always been there too, they were confined; they could not be made to go anywhere but where they had always gone, with only slight deviations. Boats, therefore, were never invested with the symbolic power that land travel was. The first canals were built at the same time as the first turnpike roads and so the waterways never had the chance to gain public notice and support as a means of comfortable travel in new directions. Dussinger also points out the status symbol quality of a carriage, and no doubt this too helped to load the scales against canals.[31] Private carriages were really only affordable to the landed and middle classes, the lower classes did not have this option and the association of them with packet boats would have been a deterrant to the wealthy. It seems that packet boats were, however, sometimes divided into two classes, as trains were to be later, so there must have been some variety in who travelled on them.

Thomas Love Peacock's novel Crotchet Castle is exceptional in that it does more than simply mention a canal, it describes a journey along one. As one of only two novels which do more than make a passing mention of canals, it is not inappropriate to make a brief comparison of Crotchet Castle with The Fool of Quality. Besides being at the opposite end of the Canal Age to The Fool of Quality, the treatment of canals

in Crotchet Castle is itself opposite to that in the other novel. In the one the reader is presented with a long discourse on the subject where it really has no place, in the other, the reader is led to expect that there will be a detailed account of canals but it is not there. Instead, a journey that would have taken perhaps a couple of weeks, and that would have been a novel, if not totally enjoyable, trip to all on board, is introduced in one preliminary speech:

> MR CROTCHETT, JUN.
>
> I hope, Mr Firedamp, you will let your friendship carry you a little closer into the jaws of the lion. I am fitting up a flotilla of pleasure boats, with spacious cabins, and a good cellar, to carry a choice philosophical party up the Thames and Severn, into the Ellesmere Canal, where we shall be among the mountains of North Wales: which we may climb or not, as we think proper; but we will, at any rate, keep our floating hotel well provisioned and we will try to settle all the questions over which a shadow of doubt yet hangs in the world of philosophy.[32]

and completed in one short paragraph. As the discovery that Henry Brooke was once occupied in writing a pamphlet on the promotion of inland navigation helps explain the anomalies in his novel, so a look at the life of Thomas Love Peacock helps to explain why he should send the characters of his novel on a fascinating journey but not let the reader accompany them.

The first fact that comes to light is that Peacock nearly did part of the journey himself. Accompanied by Percy Bysshe Shelley, Mary Godwin, and Charles Clairmont, he travelled as far as Lechlade on the upper Thames. Felix Felton explains what happened then:

> It was the dry season, and when they reached Inglesham Weir, above Lechlade, the cattle were 'standing across the stream, with the water scarcely covering their knees'. Shelley was all for pushing on further by canal into the Severn, but the canal dues were too costly for them. Peacock, in his characteristic way of compensating for the disappointments of real life in his novels, made the journey years later, in the pages of Crotchet Castle.[33]

This is a handy explanation but it does not totally explain the situation. If Peacock was as disappointed as is indicated, he could have arranged to have made the trip some other time. That he did not is obvious from the absence of description in the novel, but one wonders why he should include the event in the novel but not allow his imagination to describe what it might have been like. There were a few books already published containing accounts of other people's journey's through tunnels and along canals which would have enabled him to come up with an accurate description. The parts of the journey that would particularly have deserved mention are the passing through locks, through tunnels, particularly Sapperton Tunnel, one of the longest on the canal system, and over aqueducts, such as Pontcysyllte, also one of the most impressive structures on the canals. Instead all the description given is:

> Leaving Lechlade, they entered the canal that connects the Thames with the Severn; ascended by many locks; passed by a tunnel three miles long, through the bowels of Sapperton Hill; agreed unanimously that the greatest pleasure derivable from visiting a cavern of any sort was that of getting out of it; descended by many locks again, through the valley of Stroud into the Severn; continued their navigation into the Ellesmere canal; moored their pinnaces in the Vale of Llangollen by the aqueduct of Pontycysyllty; and determined to pass some days in inspecting the scenery, before commencing their homeward journey. (page 209)

The trip to Wales was necessary to further the action of the novel, but it is odd that Peacock should choose to use such an unusual means of transport when he could have sent the characters by coach and the lack of detail of the journey would have been unremarkable. Instead he chooses a remarkable way of travelling but disappoints the present-day reader (and perhaps some of his earlier readers too) by not describing the journey. One possible explanation is that Peacock was making a conscious effort to break away from continual use of carriages in novels, and was aware that readers expected an account of a coach journey and the conversations en route. He may have been using the canal as a way to pass the journey quickly without having to provide the description the readers expected. This is an unlikely explanation, however, and I feel the real reason lies in the conflict that existed within Peacock as to the advantages and disadvantages of canals and his simultaneous interest and uninterest in the subject (this ambivalence has been discussed above, p90).

Other accounts of journeys along canals by people outside the canal world come from the writings of travellers and diarists of that period. Although many of them had no specific interest in canals, they could not help but encounter them at times and if they were diligent recorders they made note of it. One example of this is a woman named Miss Weeton. Miss Weeton was a governess and school teacher who lived near Derby and travelled at times to Liverpool for holidays. Her preferred way to get there was by canal packet boat. She gives little description of the boat itself and her interest was clearly more in the company on the boat. This is not surprising for packet boats must have been a familiar sight to her even if she herself did not travel on them as often as she may have wished. She did, however, describe one journey in her letters:

> I arrived again at my lodgings after a very pleasant sail down the canal, perfectly safe and sound both in body and mind, with a little less fat perhaps in the evening than I set out with in the morning; for, whether inside or outside, I was almost half baked. The cook generally begins her operations by ten o'clock in the morning, frying bacon, eggs, beef steaks, potatoes, and mutton chops; roasting meat, warming meat pies, &c., and seldom finishes before 3 or 4 o'clock in the afternoon; for most people who go in the tail end of the packet seem to think that eating and drinking is the most delightful amusement of travelling. The generality of those who sail in the upper end seem to have very different ideas. They appear as if ashamed of such a piece of vulgarity as the indulging a propensity to eat; and just as one begins to think that they have learnt to exist without eating, perhaps they bring forth a dainty bit of chicken, ham, or game; a pot of veal, or shrimps, or a little tart that will scarce be two mouthfuls, just to convince the rest of the company that they do eat sometimes. . . .
>
> The company when I got into the boat, consisted of six or seven at the front end, who went all the way; eight others were all we took in. I wished to have seen a great many additional new faces, for that forms a great part of my amusement when travelling in this manner, but was not gratified. Some very odd faces are to be seen sometimes. Two old ladies got in a few miles from Liverpool. The very moment they could squat themselves on the cushion, they began to knit. One had a good hardy look, as if she had been stewed to make her keep. She looked more like a coddled gooseberry than anything else; her cheeks were

> very near the colour of one, and so were her eyes, not being a whit brighter. She has a most livid appearance, yet did not look to be much out of health. They both affected a few girlish airs, which made me conclude them to be what some impertinent married ladies call — 'old maids,' which made me the more ready to ridicule them; for they had no title for such airs, except they laid a claim to antediluvian youth.[34]

From this it is obvious that Miss Weeton was not a stranger to canal travel, and from her descriptions of her travelling companions one gets the impression that quite a mixture of people did use this form of transportation, whether from choice as it was the most comfortable, or from necessity as it was the cheapest, it is impossible to say. Neither of these reasons would have been an inducement to the upper class, whose own carriages were by now fairly comfortable to travel in and to whom cost was not a consideration, but they would have made canal travel attractive to many members of the middle class. Unfortunately, we cannot take Miss Weeton as being a typical traveller for she was an eccentric woman and that she did something is by no means an indication that others of her class did likewise.

Another traveller who recounted her journey on a canal boat was the young Margaret Gray, who was 13yrs, 9mths old at the time she went on tour to the Isle of Man in 1822:

> We and all our luggage proceeded to the Duke of Bridgewater's Canal and we got into the canal boat to go to Manchester, which is 37 miles from Runcorn. The boat is of curious shape, with a top like that of a stage coach, and a cabin inside. We were pulled along by horses at a rate of four miles an hour. We enjoyed it very much as it was a fine day, and we got rested from the fatigues we had undergone before. The views were beautiful. We went over rivers, roads, and canals. They do not provide dinner on board, but we brought some cheese bread and porter with us for a lunch. It appeared a great come down after the Majestic Steam Packet [which they took on the river from Liverpool to Runcorn]. We did not arrive in Manchester till about six o'clock. After we landed we had to go through a good many streets, among the rest, Peterloo, where was the famous massacre. There is a new church building in Peterloo. We arrived at the Bridgewater Arms, and got our dinner, and then retired to rest to prepare for the journey of the next day.[35]

Margaret was not a seasoned canal traveller and so we hear more of the actual journey and the boat they travelled on. It was a novel way of travelling and clearly an enjoyable one, even though no dinner was provided on this journey. There were people around who knew more about the canals than the Gray family, and on an earlier trip by coach, when they had to get out to walk up a hill, they 'were informed by a passenger that there was a tunnel under ground for three miles through which the vessels sailed. It is said to be the largest in England'.[36] It is probable that Margaret recorded this fact from a sense of duty to record all information rather than from interest in the tunnel itself; one can only speculate on what knowledge and interest this other passenger had in canals or whether he or she had simply been told this fact by someone else.

Robert Southey has been a recurring figure in this study and he features yet again in this discussion of travel on the canals. In Letters from England the following description is given:

> [We] embarked upon the canal in a stage boat, bound for Chester. . . . This was a new mode of travelling, and a delightful one it proved. . . . Two horses, harnessed one before the other, tow it along at the rate of a league an hour; the very pace which it is pleasant to keep up with when walking on the bank. The canal is just wide enough for two boats to pass; sometimes we sprung ashore, sometimes stood or sate[sic] upon the roof, — till to our surprise we were called down to dinner, and found that as good a meal had been prepared in the back part of the boat while we were going on, as would have been supplied at an inn. We joined in a wish that that the same kind of travelling were extended everywhere: no time was lost; kitchen and cellar travelled with us; the motion was imperceptible, we could neither be overturned nor run away with, if we sunk there was not depth of water to drown us; we could read as conveniently as in a house, or sleep as quietly as in a bed.[37]

This very positive view of canal travel agrees with that of young Margaret Gray as regards the pleasantness of the journey, and the comments on the food are similar to those of Nelly Weeton. Travelling on canals was therefore yet another aspect of them which Southey could admire, and with every reason. All those who have given accounts of journeys on canal boats agree that it was a most comfortable and restful way to travel (an opinion shared by twentieth century canal travellers) and validating the claim made in an advertisement for trips

from Lancaster to Preston in 1802 that 'for safety, economy and comfort no other mode of conveyance could be so eligible; for there the timid might be at ease and the most delicate without fear'[38].

Although Southey did not write verse about a journey along a canal, another poet did. D. D. Gladwin, in The Canals of Britain, found that 'such indeed was the demand for passage craft of various kinds that even poets could wax lyrical', as a Mr Maxwell did in the early 1800s:

> For here a cabin at each end is found,
> That doeth with all conveniences abound,
> One in the head, for ladies nine or ten,
> Another in the stern, for gentlemen.
> With fires and tables, seats to sit at ease,
> They may regale themselves with what they please,
> For all utensils here are at command.
> To eat and drink whate'er they have at hand.[39]

Mr Maxwell was referring to the Forth and Clyde service, but the arrangement sounds similar to that described on other boats, although it would seem the division of front and back cabin was sometimes between first and second class rather than ladies and gentlemen. This verse shows that passenger boats were popular, and why they were not written about more often is a mystery.

iii. Canal Workers

Although, as with the navigators, there is little to be learned about the boatpeople from reading the mainstream literature of the time, once again there are ballads which give some insight as to how they appeared to others and in what aspects they attracted attention and created interest in themselves. A fight between two men by the names of Scott and Gransby (or Granby) has been responsible for two ballads. Sam Scott was a fly boatman (fly boats ran day and night with relays of horses and men, providing a faster service than the normal boats) and the first song in particular, "The Famous Battle between Scott and Gransby" reveals a few things about the fly-boatmen. Mostly it emphasises the strength Scott possesses, and contrasts this with the "science" displayed by his opponent, who is a boxer. The moral of the song is in the first stanza: 'Never boast

of science any more, for power of the arm / Will pull your courage down full soon and be not worth a damn', and this point is repeated again in the last stanza after Scott has shown that "strength of arm must triumph in the end." The boatmen were very strong as they had to load and unload their boats as well as work locks, leg through tunnels, and do all the other jobs that were necessary to keep a boat running quickly. It is clear in both songs that Scott wins the fight through sheer brute strength which the scientific boxer from Birmingham lacks.

Boatmen tended to have little concern for the 'decencies of life' and this is indicated by the line, 'The boatmen stript into his buff with fearless unconcern.' But more revealing is the word "fearless". Boatmen were not only strong, they were tough, and used to fighting. A fairly recent account tells how 'at Stoke Prior . . . the boatmen at turning out time would proceed to "fight each other fiercely to a standstill"',[40] and there are many accounts of fights in the early days of the canals some of which resulted in murder.[41]

Despite the antagonism that was felt towards boat people by land dwellers, the attitude of both songs seems to be one of support for Scott and scorn for Gransby for not taking Scott seriously as a challenger. Both versions are on broadsides and would probably have been written soon after the event and distributed in the area and along the canal. They are part of a large canon of ballads celebrating boxing matches and other similar sporting events, feeding the interest of the public in such competitions, which in this case was probably uninfluenced by the occupation of Sam Scott, except that the boating community would have been eager purchasers of the ballads.

Another source of information on the boatpeople is newspapers of the time. Unfortunately, these, in the way of the press, concentrate on the negative side of their lives, and through this influenced the public to believe the worst of this group of people. Hanson comments that 'many people, at almost any time that the waterways were carrying goods, would have agreed with the *Standard* reporter when he concluded in 1877 "Canal boatmen are, speaking generally, not the pleasantest fellows to have to do with . . . " because that was the popular image of the canal folk — or those on boats at least.'[42] Hanson has another interesting theory, which may go part way to explaining the neglect canals and canal people received over these years:

> People who have made a whole life-style of wandering, by necessity or desire, have carried more than their fair share of the burden of society's prejudices. Jews and Gypsies have proved useful scapegoats for centuries.

> It is perhaps no coincidence that, as the uneven weight of suffering did begin to lift somewhat from the shoulders of these two unfortunate burdened races in early nineteenth-century Britain (if not in the world at large), there emerged a third group worthy of castigation. Here was a new pagan race of predators who, wherever they passed, supposedly left a trail of depredation and violence. Their mode of life became synonymous in the public mind with ignorance and squalor; drunkenness and sin. (pages 201-202)

The absence of accounts of their lives by the boatpeople means that the truth of their life-style is not known; it is probable that at this stage the public would not have wanted to know about them if the opportunity had been there.

Although the work of the engineers on the canals was finished by the time the canals were in use, they were not forgotten. Having got on to the subject of canals in Letters to England, Southey goes on to demonstrate that to some the genius of those who build the first canals was not forgotten and would forever arouse interest:

> England is now intersected in every direction by canals. This is the province in which they were first tried by the present duke of Bridgewater, whose fortune has been amply increased by the success of his experiment. His engineer Brindley was a singular character, a man of real genius for this particular employment, who thought of nothing but locks and levels, perforating hills, and floating barges upon aqueduct bridges over unmanageable streams. When he had a plan to form he usually went to bed, and lay there working it out in his head till the design was completed. It is recorded of him, that being asked in the course of an examination before the House of Commons for what he supposed rivers were created, he answered after a pause, - To feed navigable canals! (page 214).

Although he was writing after the time of the Canal Age, Thomas Carlyle was obviously interested in the first canal engineer, James Brindley, and he uses him as his example of the typical Englishman, John Bull:

> How one loves to see the burly figure of him, this thick-skinned, seemingly opaque, perhaps sulky, almost stupid Man of Practise, pitted against some light adroit Man of Theory, all equipt with clear logic, and able anywhere to give you Why for Wherefore! The adroit Man of Theory, so light of movement, clear of utterance, with his bow full-bent and quiver full of arrow-arguments, — surely he will strike down the game, transfix everywhere the heart of the matter; triumph everywhere, as he proves that he shall and must do? To your astonishment, it turns out oftenest No. The cloudy-browed, thick-soled, opaque Practicality, with no logic[sic] utterance, in silence mainly, with here and there a low grunt or growl, has in him what transcends all logic-utterance: a Congruity with the Unuttered. The Speakable, which lies atop, as a superficial film, or outer skin, is his or not his: but the Doable, which reaches down to the World's centre, you find him there!
>
> The rugged Brindley has little to say for himself; the rugged Brindley, when difficulties accumulate on him, retires silent, 'generally to his bed;' retires 'some-times for three days together to his bed, that he may be in perfect privacy there,' and ascertain in his rough head how the difficulties can be overcome. The in-eloquent Brindley, behold he *has* chained seas together; his ships do visibly float over valleys, invisibly through the hearts of mountains; the Mersey and the Thames, the Humber and the Severn have shaken hands: Nature most audibly answers, Yea![43]

Other writers did not elevate Brindley to quite the same position as Carlyle did, but he remained appreciated by many people. Thomas Pennant, for instance, takes time from describing The Journey from Chester to London, to talk about him:

> IT was a peculiar felicity to the Duke of BRIDGEWATER, to find a genius such as *Brindley*, cotemporary to the great designs formed by his Grace. That wonderful mechanic naturally fell under the Duke's patronage, and was the grand contriver of all the works which his noble friend carried on. Many of his projects were of so stupendous a kind, and so incomprehensible to vulgar minds, as to subject him to great ridicule, till the scoffers were put to confusion by the successful execution.

> WHEREVER any great difficulty arose, he constantly took to his bed, excluded all light, and lay in meditation for two or three days, till he had in idea completed the whole of his plan. A poet would have said, he was visited by his muse in those hours of seclusion. *Brindley* certainly was illuminated, amidst the darkness, by his attendant genius.[44]

Pennant had more to say about Brindley (and the Duke of Bridgewater), and presumably it was information that he considered his readers would be interested in, as he himself obviously was. The story of Brindley retiring to his bed for days on end was obviously a popular one, but how often he actually did this is unknown. I suspect he may only have done it once, but the story has been repeated and has grown to be described as it was in these two quotes. Whether this story is myth or fact, the important thing is that even many years after his death Brindley was not forgotten and his achievements were still being celebrated.

2. CANAL WORKERS' VIEWS

Looking for material which gives the boatpeople's point of view is a fruitless task. Whether because of illiteracy, or the fullness of their lives, or for whatever reason, there is no more than one song to be found from the Canal Age which originates with the boatpeople. Possibly this reflects a lack of interest in their own life style as well as a lack of interest from outside. The song that does exist is remarkable in many ways, however, not least as an historical document.

This song is "The Tommy Note". The tommy system was one which came into use, fairly early during the Industrial Revolution as a way for contractors, mine owners and others to pay their workers without dealing out cash. The workers were given a "tommy note" which they could only spend at the employer's "tommy" or "truck" shop. One of the major railway contractors reported to the Select Committee on Railway Labourers (1846) that "it has been the custom for the last hundred years, ever since they commenced making canals, to pay the men in this way."[45] While it was a good idea in some ways as it stopped the men drinking all their wages, it was also a greatly abused system as often the goods in the tommy shops were of very poor quality and greatly over priced, and sometimes it simply ensured that the men did all their drinking at the pub which would accept their tokens, but give them poor value for them, which could and did lead to trouble. Coleman reports that 'systems varied but the effect of all of them was to exploit the navvy for the greater profit of his employers.'[46] A graphic description of the tommy system at work can be seen in Disraeli's Sybil.[47]

The song is written about both miners and boatpeople and begins by clearly stating the intent of the song:

> You boatsmen and colliers all,
> Come listen to my ditty,
> I'll sing you a song before its long,
> It is both new and pretty;
> It is concerning Tommy Shops,
> And the High Field ruffian,
> He pays you with a tommy note,
> You must have that or nothing.

The next stanza is about the colliers, but the rest of the song, five more stanzas, is about the boatpeople. The song starts using third person narration but this changes to first person in the fifth stanza, indicating that the writer of the song was a boatperson or identified more with them than with the colliers. There is some description of the boating, such as:

> Come gear the horse and clear the line,
> And jump on board the boat sir,
> Both night and day we'll stear our way,
> For another tommy note sir.

Jon Raven is of the opinion that "The Tommy Note" is unique on two counts: 'it is the only known song that describes detail of the canal boat people's working lives' and 'it is the only song in the entire British Industrial song tradition to deal at length with the truck system.'[48] There are a few songs from later in the nineteenth century which are about working boats, but these give little or no authentic detail, being comic songs with no attempt at reality. "The Tommy Note" is a serious song, with a serious message. The truck system has been covered in literature in connection with miners and it is interesting to see evidence in songs of its influence on canals (see also "The Bold Navigators", pp. 56ff).

The song also gives some idea of family life on the boat ('the children look so funny'), an indication that the ballad was composed either during the Napoleonic wars or later, when the boatmen's wives and families started to move on to the boats.[49] No date is given for the song; but the presence of the children on board the boats indicates that it comes from the early nineteenth century. This was a practise that was eventually to meet with disapproval and later in the nineteenth century a poet was inspired to verse by what he recognised to be the appalling conditions on board boats for families:

> Seven in a small boat huddled,
> With beds, and pots, and cans,
> When wintry winds are wailing,
> Or summer zephyr fans,
> Even from the year's beginning,
> Until it endeth slow;
> Ye who give laws to England,
> How long shall this be so?[50]

But this was later; up until 1830 at any rate no one cared much what life was like for those who lived and worked on the canals.

The issues that people were interested in, and did notice, about established canals during the Canal Age were concerned with their effect on the world around them. Their appearance was discussed, the improvements in commerce and manufacture which they brought were a popular subject, and the improved lifestyle they introduced to rural areas also drew comment. The actual operation and running of the canal system is not described, nor is the life and routine of those who worked on the boats which transported the goods around the country, and started them on their journey to other countries. This is most likely due to the working-class nature of canals, which made them unpleasant subjects to talk or think about. It was probably not so much the case that outsiders were not interested in canal people, but that they did not consciously realise that they existed. Travellers who noticed a canal in passing did not think about it in any terms other than as a means of

moving goods around the country, certainly it did not occur to them to wonder about what really went on along the navigable waterways of England.

NOTES

1 Jane Austen, Pride and Prejudice (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 265.

2 Renwick, W. L.,'Introduction' to John Moore, Mordaunt (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. xvii.

3 Thomas Love Peacock, Headlong Hall and Gryll Grange (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 3-4.

4 Felix Felton, Thomas Love Peacock (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973), p. 53.

5 Felton, p. 53.

6 Felton, p. 293.

7 Thomas Love Peacock, Memoirs of Percy Bysshe Shelley and Other Essays and Reviews ed: Howard Mills (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1970), p. 58.

8 Peacock, Memoirs, p. 58.

9 Peacock, Melincourt or Sir Oran Haut-Ton (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd, 1896), p. 189.

10 Tobias Smollett, Humphrey Clinker (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p. 285.

11 William Cobbett, Rural Rides (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), p. 348.

12 Eric Hobsbawn, The Pelican Economic History of Britain, Vol. 3, From 1750 to the Present Day: Industry and Empire (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), p. 30.

13 Thomas Pennant, The Journey from Chester to London, (London: Wilkie and Robinson, et al, 1811), p. 75.

14 Pennant, pp. 205-6.

15 Stebbing Shaw, The History and Antiquities of Staffordshire, Vol. I (Wakefield, West Yorkshire: E. P. Publishing Ltd, 1976), p. *209.

16 Hon. John Byng, The Torrington Diaries, ed: C. Bryn Andrews, abridged by Fanny Andrews (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode,1954), p. 263.

17 Sylas Neville, The Diary of Sylas Neville 1767-1788, ed: Basil Cozens-Hardy (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 253.

18 These songs, and all others not quoted in full in the text, are included in the Appendix.

19 Palmer, Touch on the Times, p. 31.

20 Roy Palmer, ed., A Ballad History of England from 1588 to the Present Day (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd, 1979), p. 101.

21 Martha Vicinus, The Industrial Muse (London: Croom Helm, 1974), pp. 295-297.

22 Leslie Shepard, The Broadside Ballad: A Study in Origins and Meaning (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1962), p. 161. From a sheet titled 'The Vocal Grove; a Variety of Songs' (London: Catnach, c1838). See appendix.

23 Included in the appendix.

24 Jon Raven, The Urban and Industrial Songs of the Black Country and Birmingham (Wolverhampton: Broadside, 1977), p. 221.

25 W. H. Logan (ed), A Pedlar's Pack of Ballads and Songs (Edinburgh: William Paterson, 1869), pp. 202-4. From John Freeth, A Touch on the Times, being a Collection of New Songs to Old Tunes, etc.

26 Elizabeth Gaskell, Ruth (London: John Murray, 1925), p. 365.

27 Arthur Young, Tours in England and Wales (London: London School of Economics and Political Science (University of London), 1932), p. 246.

28 Young, Tours in England and Wales, pp. 255-257.

29 Percy G. Adams, Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1983), p. 215.

30 John A. Dussinger, ' "The Glory of Motion": Carriages and Consciousness in the Early Novel', Eighteenth-Century Fiction, I, 2, (Jan, 1989), 133.

31 Dussinger, pp.136-139.

32 Thomas Love Peacock, Nightmare Abbey and Crotchet Castle (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), p. 140.

33 Felton, p. 96.

34 N. W. Stock, Miss Weeton's Journal of a Governess, (Newton Abbot: David and Charles Reprints, 1969), Vol I, pp. 164-165.

35 Mrs Edwin (Almyra) Gray, Papers and Diaries of a York Family 1764-1839 (London: The Sheldon Press, 1927), p. 225.

36 Mrs Gray, p. 209.

37 Robert Southey, Letters from England, ed: Jack Simmons (London: The Cresset Press, 1951), pp. 213-214.

38 R. W. A. Swain, "The Packet Boats", in Waterways World, June 1989, p. 65.

39 D. D. Gladwin, The Canals of Britain (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd, 1973), p. 91. No further reference is given for this verse.

40 Hanson, Canal People (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1978), p. 32.

41 Hanson, pp. 28-29.

42 Hanson, p. 184.

43 Thomas Carlyle, Past and Present (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1912), p. 153.

44 Thomas Pennant, pp. 73-4.

45 Coleman, The Railway Navvies (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1965), p.82.

46 Coleman, p. 81.

47 Book III, chs 1,3.

48 Raven, Urban and Industrial Songs, p. 54.

49 See Hanson, ch. 5. 'By the early 1820s it was common to see women and children passing over the English canals' p. 65.

50 Gladwin, p. 97. By 'Mr John Harris of Falmouth, the "Cornish Poet", in 1860'.

The search for references to canals in literature of the Canal Age has been a disappointing one as far as quantity of material is concerned. Out of what has been found, however, some trends have appeared. More was involved in determining the amount of interest an event provoked than simply the importance of the event. There can be no doubt that the appearance and spread of canals in England was important; they had a long-term impact on the country in many ways. Yet they were largely overlooked in most forms of literature of the period, appearing predominantly only in the items written specifically to promote them, and in the literature of the people who worked on them.

One trend this study has revealed is that what public interest there was lasted only until the opening of the canal. Once it was in use, a canal ceased to be written about; the interest in it which had been created by the pamphlets and fed by accounts of its construction, died down after the opening ceremony had been described and, presumably, the profits had started to roll in. After that most references to canals are either incidental, or by enthusiasts. This suggests that the motive behind many of the promotional articles and those that appeared during the construction stage was more financial than outwardly appears. The public may not have been interested to know that construction was underway on a certain canal unless they had money invested in it. Once the canal was opened there was no longer any need to reassure investors that the project they had put their money into was still going ahead. Consequently the articles on canals ceased to appear.

The fact that there was this strongly mercenary side to the public attitude to canals may also partially account for the absence of references to them in other forms of literature throughout the Canal Age. It was not that they were not considered important; enough people did write about canals to suggest that the importance of them was recognised. However, they were associated with two subjects which were not usually covered in fiction, nor in popular travel accounts: money-making, and the working class. Canals were basically lower class; they may sometimes have been promoted and financed by the nobility, but they were built and used by the working class. And they were largely financed by speculators, those out to make money and raise their social standing. Both these groups of people were out of the range of interest of writers and their readers, and so rendered canals, if not a taboo subject, then one best not referred to.

There are other possible reasons for the omission of canals, especially from fiction. Besides the established dominance of carriages, there is also a tendency for novels to be set back in time, which would explain why those written during the Canal Age do not mention the waterways. One would expect, however, to then find canals featuring in novels of the Victorian era. There are a few more incidental references in

Victorian novels than are present in those of the Canal Age, but waterways are not represented to the extent that railways are. This too may be explained by the matter of class, or by the possibility suggested by Barrie Trinder in The Making of the Industrial Landscape that 'it was in the 1830s and 1840s that industry came to be regarded with disgust, as something unworthy of the attention of cultivated people' which resulted in such industrial things as canals being ignored as much as possible.[1] (Railways escaped this ostracism because they had more of a name for passenger transport, and were so much faster that they were used by a wider variety of people).

Even travellers are likely to have avoided mentioning canals unless they had a previously developed interest in them. Once built, canals did not draw the attention; they were quiet and blended well into the surrounding landscape. I believe this is one of the reasons they fared so badly compared with the railways, which were noisy and ostentatious; if canals had been more conspicuous they may have received more notice from travellers, novelists, and other writers. As it was, the only noise they produced was negative, the sounds of fighting navigators, succeeded by the sounds of fighting boatmen. Their potentially peaceful and idyllic nature was overruled by negative reports of those who worked on them.

Even among ballads, where most literature of working people during the Industrial Revolution is to be found, canals are poorly represented. It has been impossible to study this area as thoroughly as it deserves owing to the inaccessibility of collections of broadsheets, but research done by others suggests than both navigators and boatpeople may have been less original in their songs than other groups of workers. This may be due to their more isolated working conditions, or perhaps canals just attracted a less creative group of people. It could also be that lack of interest in the subject until recent years has resulted in less research being done and so fewer ballads with a canal basis have been brought to light.

It is clear from the literature of the period that canals did not catch the attention of the general public during the years they were being built and first used. They had limited interest only at this time, and even this died away once they became established. But the recent revival of interest in canals has produced all the literature that is missing from the Canal Age, and as canals are being rebuilt, they are being written about, with settings both modern and historical. This proves that the potential for canals as a subject for literature has always been there, but the interest was not, and consequently most novelists, travellers, poets and balladeers kept with subjects they knew their audiences would wish to hear about.

NOTES

1 Barrie Trinder, The Making of the Industrial Landscape (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1982), p. 1.

CONTENTS

PADDY UPON THE CANAL

SOURCES: (1) Broadside in Box No. 3, Broadside collection, University Library, Newcastle upon Tyne; facsimile in Jon Raven, Canal Songs, p. 13. (2) Copy of same broadside in Palmer, Strike the Bell, pp. 22-23. (3) American Broadsheet printed by John Gilbert, Newcastle, from the Child Collection at the Houghton Library, Harvard University. Copy supplied by Martha Vicinus.

(1)

FROM BROADSHEET FACSIMILE

When I came to sweet Newcastle,
It happened to be in the fall
Never gave way to my rigging,
Until I landed on the Canal,
To look at such terrible romour,
It filled my heart with surprise,
To see sach great undertakings -
The like I never saw with my eyes

So farewell father and mother,
And fare ye well Ireland too,
So fare you well sister and brother
So kindly I bid you adieu.

I being a potr Irish stranger,
And knowing not what for to say,
When the ganger came up in a hurry
Saying boys its a gay time of day,
They all stood up in good order,
You'd thought him father of all,
I was wishing that very same moment
I was dying upon the Canal.

(2)

TAKEN FROM SAME BROADSHEET

When I came to sweet Newcastle
It happened to be in the fall.
I never gave way to my rigging
Till I landed up on the canal.
To look at such terrible rumour,
It filled my heart with surprise,
To see such great undertakings
The like I ne'er saw with my eyes.

So farewell, father and mother,
And fare ye well, Ireland, too;
So fare ye well, sister and brother,
So kindly I bid you adieu.

I being a poor Irish stranger,
And knowing not what for to say,
When the ganger came up in a hurry,
Saying, 'Boys, it's a gay time of day',
They all stood up in good order,
You'd thought him father of all;
I was wishing that very same moment
I was dying upon the canal.

I fell in love with a farmers daughter
And she was right proud do you see
I caught her right round by the middle
And set her right down on my knee
The old woman got up in a hurry
And loudly began for to bawl;
Saying get out you saucy big jade,
For Paddy will prove your downfal

The girls they do all love me here,
Or where ever that I do go,
There's Sarah and Betsey and Polly,
They all do call me their beau,
The old woman got up in a hurry
And loudly began for to bawl.
Saying we never got good of our daughter
Since Paddy came on the Canal

I learnt the art of Navigation,
I think it a very fine trade,
I can handle the pick and the shovel,
Likewise the wheelbarrow and spade
I learned to be very handy,
Although I am not very tall,
I could handle the sprig of shilelagh
With ever a boy on the Canal,

I fell in love with a farmer's daughter,
And she was right proud, do you see?
I caught her right round by the middle
And set her right down on my knee.
The old woman got up in a hurry
And loudly began for to bawl,
Saying, ' Get out, you jaucy big jade,
For Paddy will prove your downfall.'

The girls they do all love me here,
Or wherever that I do go:
There's Sarah and Betsey and Polly,
They all do call me their beau.
The old woman got up in a hurry
And loudly began for to bawl,
Saying, ' We never got good of our daughter
Since Paddy came on the canal.'

I learnt the art of navigation;
I think it's a very fine trade:
I can handle the pick and the shovel,
Likewise the wheelbarrow and spade.
I learned to be very handy;
Although I am not very tall,
I could handle the sprig of shillelagh
With every a boy on the canal,

So now to conclude and to finish,
I'm just as true hearted an Irishman,
As ever your country did see,
So fill up a glass and be hearty,
And drink a good health to us all,
And to every true hearted Irishman,
That's digging upon the Canal.

And to publish in every degree,
I'm just as true-hearted an Irishman
As ever your country did see.
So fill up a glass and be hearty
And drink a good health to us all,
And to every true-hearted Irishman,
That's digging upon the canal.

(3)

FROM AMERICAN BROADSHEET

When I came to sweet Phildelphia
It happened to be in the fall
Never gave way to the rigging,
Until I landed on the Canal.
To look at such terrible rumour,
It filled my heart with surprise
To see such great undertakings -
The like I ne'er saw with my eyes.
So farewell father and mother,
And fare you well Ireland too,
So fare you well father and mother,
So kindly I bid you adieu.

I being a poor Irish stranger,

And knowing not what for to say,

When the ganger came up in a hurry,

Saying, ' boys it is gay time of day,'

They all stood up in good order

You'd thought he was father of all,

I was wishing that very same moment,

I was digging upon the Canal.

I fell in love with a rich farmers' daughter

And she was right proud did you see,

I caught her close round by the middle,

And set her right down on my knee

The old woman got up in a hurry

And loudly began for to bawl

Saying, 'get out, you saucy bold jade,

For Paddy will prove your downfal,'

The girls they do all love me here,

Or wherever that I do go,

There's Sarah and Betsey and Polly,

They all do call me their beau!

The old woman got up in a fury,

And loudly began for to bawl,

Saying, 'we never got good of our daughter

Since Paddy came on the Canal.

I learned the art of excavation

I thought it a very fine trade

I could handle the pick and shovel

Likewise the wheel-barrow and spade;

I learned to be very handy

Although I am not very tall,

I can handle the sprig of shilelagh,

With ever a boy on the Canal,

So now to conclude and finish

And publish in every degree

I am as just as true hearted an Irishman,

As ever your country did see.

So fill up a glass and be hearty,

And drink a good health to us all

And to every true hearted Irishman,

That's digging upon the Canal

THE BOLD ENGLISH NAVVY

SOURCE: No printed versions. Sung by Lal Smith, Belfast, 1952. In Peter Kennedy, Folksongs of Britain and Ireland, p. 397.

I'm a bold English navvy that fought on the line

The first place that I met was Newcastle-on-Tyne

I bein' tired, sick and weary from working all day

To a cot down by the hillside I'm making my way

O I first had me supper and then had a shave

For courtin' this fair maid I highly prepared

Th'ould stars in the sky as the moon it shone down

And I hit for the road with my navvy boots on

I knocked at my love's window, my knock she did know

And out of her slumber she woken so slow

I knocked there again and she said: Is that John?

And I quickly replied: With my navvy boots on

O she opened the window and than let me in

Twas into her bedroom she landed me then

Th'ould night it being cold and the blankets rolled on

And I slept there all night with my navvy boots on

O then early next morning at the dawn of the day

Said I to my true love: It's time to go away

Sleep down, sleep down, you know you've done wrong

For to sleep here all night with your navvy boots on

O he bent down his head with a laugh and a smile

Saying: What could I do, love, in that little while?

And I know if I done it, I done it in fun

And I'll do it again with my navvy boots on

O then six months being over and seven at the least

When this pretty fair maid got stout round the waist

For eight months being over when nine comes along

And she handed him a young son with his navvy boots on

O come all you pretty fair maids take a warning, she said

Don't ever leave a navvy go into your bed

For when he'll get warm and think upon yon

Sure, he'll jump on your bones with his navvy boots on

THE COURTIN' COAT

SOURCE: Recorded by Patrick Shuldham-Shaw. In Kennedy, Folksongs of Britain and Ireland, p. 426.

The moon shining brightly, when shavin' my beard

Nae better for courtin' could I be prepared

The moon shining brightly once laved me along

And here I arrived wi' my courtin' coat on

Who's that at my window who gave a loud knock?

Who's that at my window who wakened me up?

Who's that at my window, O is it you John?

And here you've arrived wi' your courtin' coat on

All night we did sport and all night we did play

Courtin' the hours as the night rolls away

When early next morning she says to me: John

You'll think what you did wi' your courtin' coat on

All that I've done, lassie, and do not chide me

It was not for courtin' that I came to thee

When a man's doon in his spirits and thinks upon yon

He canna lie up wi' his courtin' coat on

NAVVY ON THE LINE

SOURCE: Broadside printed by Cadman, Manchester; from the collection at Harvard College Library. In Martha Vicinus, Broadsides of the Industrial North, p. 39.

I am a navvy bold, that has tramp'd the country round, sir
For to get a job of work where any can be found sir,
I left my native home, my friends and my relations,
To ramble up and down the town and work in various stations

CHORUS

I am a navvy don't you see, I love my beer in all my prime,
Because I am a navvy that is working on the line.

I left my native home on the first of September,
That memorable day I still do remember,
I bundled up my kit put on my smock and Sunday cap, sir,
And wherever I do ramble, folks call me happy Jack sir.

I have got a job of work all in the town of Bury,
And working on the line is a thing that makes me merry,
I can use my pick and spade, and my wheelbarrow,
And I can court the lasses too, but never intend to marry.

I worked a fortnight, and then it came to pay day,
And when I geet my wages I thought I'd have a play day,
And then to a little spree in Clark street went quite handy,
And I sat me down in Jenkinson's beside a Fanny Brandy.

I called for a pint of beer, and bid the old wench drink, sir,

But while she were drinking, she too at me did wink, sir,

Then we had some talk and in the backside we had a rally,

Then we Jump'd over brush and steel and agreed to live tally.

They called for liquors merrily the jugs went quickly round sir,

Oh, that being my wedding day I spent many a crown sir,

But when my brass was all done old Fanny went a cadging,

And for to finish up the spree I went and sloped my lodging.

O, now my chaps, I am going to leave the town of Bury,

And I am sorry for to leave you for I alway found you merry,

But now I call for liquors merry and drink away my dandy

And cry out here's health to happy Jack and Fanny Brandy.

I am a navvy, don't you see loves my beer in all my prime,

For it's I'm a navvy, bold, that's working on the line.

THE NAVIGATOR'S NEW VICTORY

Or

THE TAILORS DONE OVER

SOURCE: From the Malden Collection in the University Library, Cambridge, Vol 5, slip sheet 1197. In Later English Broadside Ballads, vol. 2, eds: John Holloway and Joan Black, No. 56, pp. 145-6.

Ye sportsmen of Chester, I'd have you draw near,

And of a fam'd runner, you quickly shall hear;

I'll sing of the praise of Joe Baker by name,

Who from Over, near Delamere forest, he came.

As a navigator and runner he's known to excel,

After running, he works at the Ellesmere canal;

In going round the Roodee, which is more than a mile,

He is only five minutes and comes in with a smile.

The first was a Tailor would run him, they say,

And he beat the stout Tailor the whole of the way,

He led this bold hero a distance or more,

And so the poor Tailor was fairly done o'er.

A shoe-maker next would run him, we find;

But poor Crispin was left near a distance behind;

Which grieved the runners of Chester full sore,

To find by a Stranger they're fairly done o'er.

After which a Chandler against him would run,

At Ten in the morning, for a very large sum;

The Roodee was crouded much more than before,

But soon the fam'd Chandler was fairly done o'er.

A Tailor from Frodsham was griev'd very much

To hear Baker's name for running was such

A challenge he sent him, to run him once round,

In Chester Race-week, and the Roodee the ground.

On Thursday, at ten in the morning they met,

The course it was crowded, the weather was wet;

But the Tailor and friends soon felt themselves sore,

Fore, ere half round, he found himself fairly done o'er.

At starting, the odds on the Tailor were great,

But soon, very soon you might see his defeat;

Ere half round, he found Baker so much far before,

He gave up the race, being so fairly done o'er.

Twenty guineas a side, they run for, they say,

And many will have to long rue the day;

Tha navigator's friends roll in money galore,

Since the Frodsham Tailor he has fairly done o'er.

THE NEW NAVIGATION

SOURCE: From A Warwickshire Medley, 1780, written by John Freeth. In Raven, Urban and Industrial Songs, pp. 220-221.

This day for our new navigation,

We banish all care and vexation,

The sight of the barges each honest heart glads

And the merriest of mortals are Birmingham lads,

Birmingham lads, jovial blades,

And the merriest of mortals are Birmingham lads.

With rapture each heart must be glowing,

Stamps, presses and lathes shall be going;

The lads to the wharf with their lasses repair

And smile at the streamers that play in the air,

Play in the air, free and fair,

And smile at the streamers that play in the air.

Let Stratford boast out of all measure

The fruits of her mulberry treasure;

Such treasures for once may cause jubilee joys

But riches spring daily from Birmingham toys,

Birmingham toys all men praise,

But riches spring daily from Birmingham toys.

The Thames, Severn, Trent and the Avon,

Our countrymen frequently rave on;

But none of their neighbours are happy as they

Who peacably dwell on the banks of the Rea,

Banks of the Rea, ever gay,

Who peacably dwell on the banks of the Rea.

Not Europe can match us for traffic,

America, Asia and Afric;

Of what we invent each partakes of a share,

For the best of wrought metals is Birmingham ware,

Birmingham ware, none so rare,

For the best of wrought metals is Birmingham ware.

Since by the canal navigation,

Of coals we've the best in the nation,

Around the gay circle your bumpers then put,

For the cut of all cuts is a Birmingham cut,

Birmingham cut, fairly wrought,

For the cut of all cuts is a Birmingham cut.

GRANTHAM NAVIGATION

SOURCE: By a "Gentleman of Grantham", published in *The Stamford Mercury*, 17 May 1793. In Palmer, Strike the Bell, pp. 20-21.

Come, since the day's for joy design'd,
Let all our cares be left behind,
And universal pleasure bind!
Adieu to all vexation;
No more let fears and doubts prevail,
Nor let our hopes or spirits fail,
For tho' we see not yet the sail,
We have the Navigation.

Let Thames, the Trent, the Severn too,
Each stream which in the world doth flow,
There various stores of traffic shew,
With envious exulatation;
But now no more; their triumph vain,
This inland borough will maintain
Its fame, & still unrivall'd reign
Secure by Navigation.

And thanks to Heav'n since 'tis perform'd,
The poor will now be cloathed & warm'd,
'Gainst wintry winds & tempest arm'd,
Snug in their habitation;
The old & young with equal joy
Will raise their voices to the sky
And children yet unborn will cry
Bless'd Grantham Navigation.

The rising wharf we soon shall see,

And commerce wide extended be,

From inland Grantham to the sea,

And far remotest nation;

The freighted bark with merchandize,

And hardy tars to steer the prize,

Will oft returning glad our eyes,

Thro' Grantham Navigation.

Thy lofty spire shall wondering tell.

Recording History too shall spell

To distant days thy fame, & swell

The world with admiration;

For long as *Granby's* name shall be

To future ages told, you'll see

This borough flourish great & free,

And boast her Navigation.

The peopled streets will now increase,

The town will smile, & trade ne'er cease,

Tho' war be wag'd, or if at peace,

We traffic thro' the nation;

Who's then so blest, or so secure?

We feed the hungry, cloath the poor,

Of never ending commerce sure,

By Grantham Navigation.

Let ev'ry heart true pleasure feel,

On this occasion shew his zeal,

His wishes for the public weal,

Whatever be his station;

Prepare his bumper, not delay

In chorus now to sing & say,

Grantham for ever, & huzza

To Grantham Navigation.

INSCRIPTIONS FOR THE CALEDONIAN CANAL

SOURCE: In The Poetical Works of Robert Southey, pp. 180-181.

1. At Clachnacaharry

Athwart the island here, from sea to sea,

Between these mountain barriers, the Great Glen

Of Scotland offers to the traveller,

Through the wilds impervious else, an easy path,

Along the shore of rivers and of lakes,

In line continuous, whence the waters flow

Dividing east and west. Thus had they held

For untold centuries their perpetual course

Unprofited, till in the Georgian age

This mighty work was plann'd, which should unite

The lakes, control the innavigable streams,

And through the bowels of the land deduce

A way, where vessels which must else have braved

The formidable Cape, and have essayed
The perils of the Hyperborean Sea,
Might from the Baltic to the Atlantic deep
Pass and repass at will. So when the storm
Careers abroad, may they securely here,
Through birchen groves, green fields, and pastoral hills,
Pursue their voyage home. Humanity
May boast this proud expenditure, begun
By Britain in a time of arduous war;
Through all the efforts and emergencies
Of that long strife continued, and achieved
After her triumph, even at the time
When national burdens bearing on the state
Were felt with heaviest pressure. Such expense
Is best economy. In growing wealth,
Comfort, and spreading industry, behold
The fruits immediate! And, in days to come,
Fitly shall this great British work be named
With whatso'er of most magnificence
For public use, Rome in her plenitude
Of power effected, or all-glorious Greece,
Or Egypt, mother-land of all the arts.

2. At Fort Augustus.

Thou who hast reach'd this level where the glede,
Wheeling between the mountains in mid air,
Eastward or westward as his gyre inclines.
Descries the German or the Atlantic Sea,
Pause here; and, as thou seest the ship pursue

Her easy way serene, call thou to mind
By what exertions of victorious art
The way was open'd. Fourteen times upheaved,
The vessel hath ascended, since she changed
The salt sea water for the highland lymph;
As oft in imperceptible descent
Must, step by step, be lower'd, before she see
The ocean breeze again. Thou hast beheld
What basins, most capacious of their kind,
Enclose her, while the obedient element
Lifts or depones its burthen, Thou has seen
The torrent hurrying from its native hills
Pass underneath the broad canal inhumed,
Then issue harmless thence; the rivulet
Admitted by its intake peaceably,
Forthwith by gentle overfall discharged:
And haply too thou hast observed the herds
Frequent their vaulted path, unconscious they
That the wide waters on the long low arch
Above them, lie sustained. What other works
Science, audacious in emprize, hath wrought,
Meet not the eye, but well may fill the mind.
Not from the bowels of the land alone,
From lake and stream hath their diluvial wreck
Been scoop'd to form this navigable way;
Huge rivers were controll'd, or from their course
Shoulder'd aside; and at the eastern mouth,
Where the salt ooze denied a resting place
There were the deep foundations laid, by weight

On weight immersed, and pile on pile down-driven,

Till steadfast as the everlasting rocks,

The massive outwork stands. Contemplate now

What days and nights of thought, what years of toil,

What inexhaustive springs of public wealth

The vast design required; the immediate good,

The future benefit progressive still;

And thou wilt pay thy tribute of due praise

To those whose counsels, whose decrees, Whose care,

For after ages formed the generous work.

3. At Banavie.

Where these capacious basins, by the laws

Of the subjacent element receive

The ship, descending or upraised, eight times,

From stage to stage with unfelt agency

Translated; fitliest may the marble here

Record the Architect's immortal name.

Telford it was, by whose presiding mind

The whole great work was plann'd and perfected;

Telford, who o'er the vale of Cambrian Dee,

Aloft in air, at giddy height upborne,

Carried his navigable road, and hung

High o'er Menai's straits the bending bridge;

Structures of more ambitious enterprize

Than minstrels in the age of old romance

To their own Merlin's magic lore ascribed.

Nor hath he for his native land perform'd

Less in this proud design; and where his piers

Around her coast from many a fisher's creek

Unshelter'd else, and many an ample port,

Repel the assailing storm; and where his roads

In beautiful and sinuous line far seen,

Wind with the vale, and win the long ascent,

Now o'er the deep morass sustain'd, and now

Across ravine, or glen, or estuary,

Opening a passage through the wilds subdued.

HUMPHREY HARDFEATURES' DESCRIPTION OF CAST-IRON INVENTIONS

SOUCE: Roy Palmer, A Touch on the Times: Songs of Social Change 1770-1914 (Harmondsworth: Penguin Education, 1974), p. 31.

Since cast-iron has got all the rage,

And scarce anything's now made without it;

As I live in this cast-iron age,

I mean to say something about it.

There's cast-iron coffins and carts.

There's cast-iron bridges and boats,

Corn-factors with cast-iron hearts,

That I'd hang up in cast-iron coats.

Iron bedsteads have long been in use;

With cast-iron they now pave our streets;

Each tailor has a cast-iron goose,

And we soon shall have cast-iron sheets.

Tommy Whalebone has grown quite a blade,

So dextrous and clever his hand is,

Swears he now shall have excellent trade

Making cast-iron stays for the dandies.

We have cast-iron gates and lamp-posts,
We have cast-iron mortars and mills, too;
And our enemies know to their cost
We have plentyof cast-iron pills, too.
We have cast-iron fenders and grates,
We have cast-iron pokers and tongs, sir;
And we soon shall have cast-iron plates,
And cast-iron small-clothes, ere long, sir.

So great is the fashion of late,
We have cast-iron hammers and axes;
And if we may judge by their weight,
We have plenty of cast-iron taxes.
Cast-iron bank-notes we can't use,
But should we e'er prove such ninnies
A good Henry Hase to refuse,
They must issue out cast-iron guineas.

BUBBLES OF 1825

SOURCE: W. H. Logan, A Pedlar's Pack of Ballads and Songs (Edinburgh: William Paterson, 1869), pp. 211-13.

Run, neighbours, run! you're just in time to get a share
In all the famous projects that amuse John Bull;
Run, take a peep on 'Change, for anxious crowds beset us there,
Each trying which can make himself the greatest gull.
No sooner are they puff'd than a universal wish there is
For shares in mines, insurances, in foreign loans and fisheries.
No matter where the project *lies*, so violent the mania,
In Africa, New Providence, Peru, or Pennsylvania!

Run, neighbours, run!, you're just in time to get a share

In all the famous Bubbles that amuse John Bull.

Few folks for news very anxious at this crisis are,

For marriages, and deaths, and births, no thirst exists;

All take the papers in, to find out what the prices are

Of shares in this of that, upon the brokers' lists.

The doctor leaves his patient, the pedagogue his Lexicon,

For mines of Real Monte, or for those of Anglo-Mexican;

Even *Chile* bonds don't cool the rage, nor those still more romantic, sir,

For new canals to join the seas, Pacific and Atlantic, sir.

Run, neighbours, run! &c.

At home we have projects too for draining surplus capital,

And honest master Johnny of his cash to chouse;

Though t'other day, Judge Abbot gave a rather sharpish slap at all,

And Eldon launched his thunder from the Upper House.

Investment banks to lend a lift to people who are undone,

Proposals for Assurance — there's no end of that in London

And one amongst the number, who in Parliament now press their bills,

For lending cash at eight per cent. on coats and inexpressibles.

Run, neighbours, run! &c.

No more with her bright pails the milkman's rosy daughter works,
A company must serve you now with milk and cream;
Perhaps they've some connection with the advertizing *Water Works*,
That promise to supply you from the limpid stream.
Another body corporate would fain some pence and shillings get,
By selling fish at Hungerford, and knocking up old Billingsgate;
Another takes your linen, when its dirty, to the suds, sir,
And brings it home in carriages with four nice bits of blood, sir.
Run, neighbours, &c.

When Greenwich coaches go by steam on roads of iron railing, sir,
How pleasant it will be to see a dozen in a line;
And ships of heavy burden over hills and valleys sailing, sir,
Shall cross from Bristol Channel to the Tweed or Tyne.
And Dame Speculation, if she ever full hath her ends,
Will give us docks at Bermondsey, St Saviour's, and St Catherine's;
While sidelong bridges over mud shall fill the folks with wonder, sir,
And lamp-light tunnels all day long convey the Cockneys under, sir.
Run, neighbours, run, &c.

A tunnel underneath the sea from Calais straight to Dover, sir,
The qualmish folks may cross by land from shore to shore,
With sluices made to drown the French, if e'er they would come over, sir,
Has long been talked of, til at length 'tis thought a *monstrous bore*.
Amongst the many scheming folks, I take it *he's* no ninny, sir,
Who bargains with the Ashantees to fish the coast of guinea, sir,
For secretly, 'tis known, that another brilliant view he has,
Of lighting up the famous town of Timbuctoo with oil gas.
Run, neighbours, run! &c.

Then a company is formed, though not yet advertizing,

To build upon a splendid scale, a large balloon,

To send up tools and broken stones for fresh Mac-Adamizing

The new discover'd turnpike roads which cross the moon.

But the most inviting scheme of all, is one proposed for carrying

Large furnaces to melt the ice which hems poor Captain Parry in;

They'll then have steamboats twice a-week to all the newly-seen land,

And call for goods and passengers at Labrador and Greenland,

Run, neighbours, run! &c.

MANCHESTER'S IMPROVING DAILY

SOURCE: Martha Vicinus, The Industrial Muse (London: Croom Helm, 1974), pp. 295-7.

This Manchester's a rare fine place,

For trade and other such like movements;

What town can keep up such a race,

As ours has done for prime improvements

For of late what sights of alterations,

Both streets and buildings changing stations,

That country folks, as they observe us,

Cry out, 'Laws! Pickle and presarve us!'

Sing hey, sing ho, sing hey down, gaily,

Manchester's improving daily.

Once Oldham Jone, in his smock frock,

I'th' town stop'd late one afternoon, sir,

And staring at th' infirmary clock,

Said, Wounds, that must be th' harvest moon, sir;

And ecod, it's fix'd fast up i'th' place there:

Well this caps aw, for I'll be bound, sir,

They mak' it shine there aw th' year round, sir.

Sing hey, etc.

Our fine town hall, that cost such cash,

Is to all buildings quite a sample;

And they say, sir, that, to make a dash,

'Twas copied from Grecan temple:

But sure in Greece none e'er could view, sir,

Such a place built slanting on a brow, sir!

But Cross-Street, where there brass to spare is,

Must be rais'd and called the Town-Hall Terrace.

Sing hey, etc.

Once Market-Street was called a lane,

Old Toad-Lane too, a pretty pair, sir;

While Dangerous-Corner did remain,

There was hardly room for a sedan chair, sir:

But now they both are open'd wide, sir,

And dashing shops plac'd on each side, sir:

And to keep up making old things new, sir,

They talk of levelling th' Mill-Brew, sir.

Sing hey, etc.

Steam coaches soon will run from here
To Liverpool and other place;
And their quicker rate and cheaper fare
Will make some folks pull curious face:
But though steam-dealers may be winners,
'Twill blow up all the whip-cord spinners;
And stable boys may grieve and weep, sir,
For horse-flesh soon will be dog cheap, sir.
Sing hey, etc.

With bumping stones our streets wur paved,
From earth like large peck-loaves up rising:
All jolts and shaking now are saved
The town they're now Mc.Adamizing:
And so smooth and soft is Cannon-Street, sir,
It suits the corns on tender feet sir:
And hookers-in, when times a'n't good there,
May fish about for eel i'th' mud there.
Sing hey, etc.

But though these roads are all the go,
The rail-ways beat 'em, I've a notion;
For carts beawt horses there will show
We've found the true perpetual motion.
And none can say but we may try, sir,
To steer large ship-balloons i'th' sky, sir;
That folks may mount sky-larking there in,
And grow sea-sick by going an airing.
Sing hey, etc.

Th' owd Stony-Knolls must be renew'd,
And feel, in turn, improvement's power;
From there to Bury they'll mak' good
A great hee-road by cutting lower:
The view from hence wur quite a show, sir,
And none but foot-folks o'er must go, sir,
Yet in Whitsun-week, as thick as grass is,
The Knolls wur fill'd wi' creawds of asses.
Sing hey, etc.

A powerful large steam-engine's bought,
And plac'd beneath a'r owd church steeple,
To warm up th' church, and soon it's thought
'Twill play the deuce wi' single people:
For a clever chap's fun eawt a scheme, sir,
To tie the marriage-know by steam, sir;
And there's no doubt, when they begin it,
They'll wed above a score a minute.
Sing hey, etc.

The spinning-jennies whirl along,
Performing strange things, I've been told, sir,
For twisting fresh and making young
All maids who own they're grown too old, sir.
The power-loom factories, of late, sir,
Have wrought such wonders, when agate, sir,
That we can weave, in time,who knows, sir,
Neat patent stays for dandy beaux, sir.
Sing hey, etc.

Thus at improvements on we go,

We're ever trying at invention;

New objects starting up to view,

And catching all our spare attention:

Then the ship canal, and all such schemes, sir,

Tho' some may call them fancy's dreams, sir,

They'll all succeed, you need not fret, sir,

As soon as John Bull's out of debt, sir.

Sing hey, etc.

PARODY ON THE ROSE BUD OF SUMMER

SOURCE: On Broadside entitled "The Vocal Grove; A Variety of Songs." Printed by Catnach, London, c1839. In Leslie Shepard, The Broadside Ballad: A Study in Origins and Meaning, p. 161.

When gooseberries grow on the stem of a daisy,

And plumb-puddings roll on the tide to the shore;

And jolap is made from the curls of a jazy,

Oh! then, Molidusta, I'll love thee no more.

When steam-boats no more on the Thames shall be going

And a cast-iron bridge reach Vauxhal from the Nore;

And the Grand Junction Water-Works cease to be flowing,

Oh! then, Molidusta, I'll love thee , &c.

THEN MY LOVE AND I'LL BE MARRIED

SOURCE: Alfred Williams, Folk Songs of the Upper Thames, p. 200.

When roses grow on thistle tops,
And brimstone's took for sugar candy,
And women can't eat sugar sops,
Oh, then my love and I'll be married.

When gold is thrown about the street,
And lies from June to January,
And dogs will not spare bones for meat,
Oh, then my love and I'll be married.

When a cobbler works without an awl,
And London into York is carried,
When smoke won't rise, nor water fall,
Oh, then my love and I'll be married.

WHEN BIRMINGHAM IS A SEAPORT TOWN

SOURCE: Miscellaneous Broadsides, Birmingham Collection, Mitchell Reference Library. In Urban and Industrial Songs, pp. 223-225.

O dear! O dear! this a curious age is,
Alteration all the rage is,
Old and young in the stream are moving,
All in the cry - improving;

ON LEEDS BECOMING A SEA-PORT TOWN

SOURCE: Broadside from Kidson Broadside Library, Glasgow. In Strike the Bell, p. 24.

Oh dear! oh dear! this a curious age is,
Alteration all the rage is -
Young and old in the stream are moving
All in the general cry improving,

To Birmingham there is news come down, sirs,	From the Exhibition I've brought news down, sirs,
They are going to make it a seaport town, sirs,	They're going to make it a sea-port town sirs,
Then, 'stead of weavers, spinners and tailors,	Then instead of Factories and cheap tailors,
Nothing you'll see but ships & sailors	Nothing you'll see but ships & sailors
This 'twill be I'll bet you a crown, sirs.	*This 'twill be I'll bet you a crown sirs.*
When Birmingham is a seaport town, sirs.	*When Leeds it is a sea-port town sirs.*
When the first ship comes in sight,	When the first ship appears in sight,
The town will be all joy and delight,	The town will all be joy & delight,
Eating, drinking, dancing, singing,	Eating, drinking, dancing, singing,
And the old church bells will crack with ringing.	The old church spire will shake with ringing
They'll cover the bridge with touts and prigs, sirs,	Then we shall meet with touts and prigs, sirs,
Aldermen, too, in their gowns and wigs sirs,	Aldermen too in their gowns & wigs sirs,
The heads of the town with all their forces,	The heads of the town with all their forces,
And the Birmingham Mayor, too, drawn by horses.	And the ____ new Mayor they'll draw with Horses.
They'll cover the river with boats and barges,	All over the town ther'll be boats and barges,
Men of-war ships, that ever so large is,	Man-o-war ships that never so large is;
Steamers back and forwards towing,	Steamers backwards and forwards towing,
You may ride for nought, and they'll pay you for going	You'll ride for nothing, and they'll pay you for going,
Sailors swearing, spars a battering,	Sailors swearing, spars a battering,
Heave yo-hoing handspikes clattering,	Heave-ye-hoing hand-spikes clattering,
Strange sails crowding every day, sirs,	Strange sails crowding every day, sirs,
Anchoring in Victoria Bay, sirs	Sailing and Anchoring in Leeds Bay sirs

The Liverpool Gents will all be undone,	The Liverpool Gents they'll all be undone,
Here there will be nought but fun done,	Here there will be nought but fun done,
Pats, half wild, running their rigs, sirs,	Pats half wild running their rigs sirs
Landing butter there, bullocks, and pigs, sirs.	Landing their butter, their bullocks, and pigs, sirs,
Then to make us jolly and frisky	Then to make us merry and frisky -
Mealy potatoes, and barrels of whiskey	Mealy potatoes & barrels of Whiskey
New laid eggs, a twelve month taken,	New-laid eggs, a twelve-month taken,
Then all will feed on eggs and bacon.	And old maids with money as rusty as bacon.
Such lots of goods the boats will bring up,	Such lots of goods the boats will bring up,
Store rooms will, like mushrooms spring up;	Store-rooms will, like mushrooms spring up;
To hold the wares of every nation,	To hold the wares of all nations
The town must have transformation	The town must have a transformation
They'll make the Exchange into a store house,	They'll make the town-hall into a store-house,
Cotton and corn rooms out of the poor house,	New rooms they'll make out of the workhouse,
One for grocers to put their figs by,	At Dock street, grocers will put their figs by,
And the Temperance Hall they'll make it a pig-sty.	And Vicars croft they'll make into a pigsty
In time you will have trade enough, sirs,	In a short time you'll have trade enough, sirs,
Over the world you'll send your stuff, sirs,	All over the world you'll send your stuff, sirs,
Goods for every clime and nation	Goods of every clime and nation,
Will all come here for embarkation,	Will all come here for embarkation,
Ringley coals, cabbages and carrots,	Machinery & Cloth, Coals & Carrots,
And in return receive poll parrots,	In return they'll get Poll Parrots,
Baboons, racoons and Spanish donkeys,	Baboons Racoons & spanish Donkeys
Jays, cockatoos, and ring tailed monkeys	Jay's Cockatoos & ringtail'd Monkeys

In a few years - say, perhaps twenty,	In a few years, say perhaps twenty,
Man o'war ships will arrive in plenty,	Man-o'-war ships will arrive in plenty,
Then as the tide of time encroaches,	Then as the tide of time encroaches,
They'll run them about the street like coaches,	They'll run 'em about the street like coaches,
Over the marshes, stones & gorses,	Over the Marshes, stones & Crosses,
Tars for jarvies, whales for horses;	Tars for Jarvies, Whales for Horses;
But I'll be off - first make my bow, sirs,	But I'll be off, first I'll make my bow sirs,
For, I really believe there's a ship coming now, sirs.	For, ecod, I believe there's a ship coming now, sirs.

SPECULATION ON THE PRESENT DAY.

SOURCE: From John Freeth, A Touch on the Times, being a Collection of New Songs to Old Tunes, etc.; in A Pedlars Pack of Ballads and Songs, pp. 202-203.

In this busy wrangling age,
Full of fraud and dissipation,
Gaming is the public rage,
All seem fond of speculation.

In the funds we every day,
See some kind of fluctuation;
Go as may the mind astray,
There's no check to speculation.

Gambling's grown to such a pitch,
In all quarters of the nation,
Some get poor, and other's rich,
By mere daily speculation.

Wheat and barley, oats and hops,
Come in common circulation;
Small if should be found the crops,
Greater then the speculation.

Many in this world of strife,
Oft have made this observation,
In the articles of life,
That there's too much speculation."

Some for copper, some for brass
Coals and timber - but the fashion,
Which all others did surpass,
Once was inland navigation.

Iron foundries many view
With an eye of admiration;
Cotton spinning, England through,
Is a thriving speculation.

Now and then a sudden burst
Fills the mind with consternation;
Often is DAME FORTUNE curst,
Thro' a misjudged speculation.

On the Stock Exchange, affairs
Sometimes cause extreme sensation;
When the *Bulls* outwit the *Bears,*
That is called keen speculation.

London's much esteemed Lord Mayor,
Merchants and Administration,
Flagrantly imposed on were
By a spurious fabrication.

State Consols, how strange to say
(What surprising alteration),
Varied nine per cent. one day!
By this knavish operation.

From the daring mischief seen
(Mischief which *delays* occasion),
Frankly 'tis allowed there's been
Too much room for speculation.

More than two months in suspense,
Intermixed with joy and sorrow,
Nothing certain - all pretence -
Peace today and war tomorrow.

What a harvest for stock-jobbers,
Such an instance, people say,
Ne'er occurred for *licensed robbers,*
Till the present bustling day.

All mankind are fond of power,
Still there will be variation,
Prospects changing every hour -
There's no end to speculation.

THE FAMOUS BATTLE BETWEEN SCOTT AND GRANSBY

SOURCE: from the Broadside Collection, Local Reference Library, Birmingham Reference Library. In Raven, Urban and Industrial Songs, pp. 210-211.

You boxing blades both far and near, come listen unto me,
Whilst I relate a boxing match which happened the other day,
Never boast of science any more, for power of the arm
Will pull your courage down full soon and be not worth a damn.

The twelfth day of July it was, as I the truth do tell,
On Billesley common was the place, as many knew full well,
Those boxers met with courage bold and expectation big,
When Gransby stept into the ring, crying, "Damne go the rig."

The boatman ( ) stript into his buff with fearless unconcern,
Saying, "Gransby, I'll gi' thee enough and cause thee for to mourn."
Then quickly they a wager laid, which was the first knocked down
But Scott being strongest in the arm, soon felled him to the ground.

Five rounds they fought and so severe, forced Gransby for to bend,
It plainly shows that strength of arm must triumph in the end,
Therefore you boxers one and all, too high ne'er rank your skill,
Or else you'll bruised be - for nought, and quickly have your fill.

Now to conclude and end my song, I hope no-one will think
I mean these boxers any wrong? No - to their healths I'll drink,
I hope that boxers from henceforth will learn to know their man,
Before they boldly challange him to fight him out of hand.

SCOTT AND GRANBY

SOURCE: From Broadside Collection, Local History Library, Birmingham Reference Library. In Urban and Industrial Songs, pp. 211-212.

Sam Scott the fly boatman a chap of renown
Beat Granby the boxer of birmingham town.
He beat him so much with his great clumsy fist
That poor Granby the boxer could scarcely exist.

It was on a large common near Mosely way green
The combatants met too and were plain to be seen.
The first setting too it was not much amiss
But Sam made poor Granby near ready to p-s.

The second set too bets went five to one
For the company knew Granby soon would be done.
And in the third bout Sam turned him quite round
He said shall I kick his a-e or knock him down.

The fourth round when they met Granby laugh'd in his face
Scott said d-m thee that shal be to thy disgrace.
He gave him such thumps he was forced to come down
So thus with Sam's heavy blows ended this round.

The fifth and last round shewd but little sport
Sam pelted poor Granby about his big throte.
He fell muzzle upwards as tho he was dead
And out of the ring he was forced to be led.

So this was the way that the battle was ended

And I think that poor Granby was not much befriended.

For instead as he expected to have beaten bold Scott

To Sam's satisfaction it was his own lot.

THE TOMMY NOTE

SOURCE: Bound in volume entitled 'Ballads and Broadsides' by Theo Vasmer; Birmingham Reference Library. In D. D. Gladwin, The Canals of Britain, pp. 59-60.

You boatsmen and colliers all,

Come listen to my ditty,

I'll sing you a song before its long,

It is both new and pretty;

It is concerning Tommy Shops,

And the High Field ruffian,

He pays you with a tommy note,

You must have that or nothing.

With the colliers I begin,

How they pay each other,

Nothing have they but a tommy note,

From one week to the other,

On Saturday when a week's work is done,

And to receive their money,

The High Field devil has learned a trick,

To pay them off with tommy.

The boatsmen now I bring in,

That sails from High Fields to Runcan;

The boatsmen and their wives,

They curse him at the junction,

And all belonging to the branch,

That know the art of boating,

Wishing the tiller down his throat,

It would be a means to choak him.

When they had done their Runcan voyage,

And go to receive their money,

One half stops for hay and corn,

The other half for tommy,

Then to the tommy shops we go,

To fetch our week's provision,

Their oatmeal, sugar, salt and soap,

Short weight and little measure.

Saying if we had money instead of this,

Provision we could have plenty,

The profit they get out of us,

Is nine shillings out of twenty,

Then we jump on board the boat,

And the children look so funny,

The voyage we so cheerful go,

Till we have eat all our tommy.

There is one amongst the rest,

That knows the art of boating,

He vows and swears a wife he'll have ,

So long he has gone a courting,

He vows he will married be,

Come listen to my joke sir,

And when the parson's done his work,

I will pay him with a tommy note sir.

Now we have finished our voyage,

The children look so funny,

For here atRuncan we do lie,

And have eat all our tommy,

Come gear the horse and clear the line,

And jump on board the boat sir,

Both night and day we'll stear our way,

For another tommy note sir.

PRIMARY REFERENCES

Aiken, J. A Description of the Country from Thirty to Forty Miles around Manchester. Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1968.

Anon. "A View of the Advantages of Inland Navigations." Monthly Review. 33 (1765). pp.468-73.

Austen, Jane. Pride and Prejudice. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972.

Bage, Robert. Man As He Is. New York: Garland Publishing Inc, 1979 (1792).

Borrow, George. Lavengro: the Scholar, the Gypsy, the Priest. London: John Murray, 1911.

Brooke, Henry. The Fool of Quality. London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1859.

Burton, Anthony. The Master Idol. London: Macdonald and Janes, 1975.

———— The Navigators. London: Macdonald and Janes, 1976.

———— A Place to Stand. London: Macdonald and Janes, 1977.

Byng, Hon. John (later Fifth Viscount Torrington). The Torrington Diaries. ed: C. Bryn Andrews, abridged by Fanny Andrews, London: Eure and Spottiswoode, 1954.

Carlyle, Thomas. Past and Present. London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1912.

Cobbett, William. Rural Rides. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967.

———— The Progress of a Plough-boy to a Seat in Parliament as Exemplified in the History of the Life of William Cobbett, Member of Oldham. ed: William Reitzel. London: Faber & Faber Ltd, 1933.

Gaskell, Mrs (Elizabeth). Ruth. London: John Murray, 1925.

Gentleman's Magazine, 30 (1760), 623.

———— 37 (1767), 328.

———— 41 (1771), 56.

Gray, Mrs Edwin (Almyra). The Papers and Diaries of a York Family 1764-1839. London: The Sheldon Press, 1927.

Meteyard, Eliza. The Life and Works of Josiah Wedgewood, from his Private Correspondence and Family Papers. 2 vols. London: Hurst and Blackett, 1865-6.

Moore, John. Mordaunt. London: Oxford University Press, 1965.

Neville, Sylas. The Diary of Sylas Neville 1767-1788. ed: Basil Cozens-Hardy, London: Oxford University Press, 1950.

Peacock, Thomas Love. Nightmare Abbey and Crotchet Castle. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969.

———— Headlong Hall and Gryll Grange. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.

———— Memoirs of Percy Bysshe Shelley and Other Essays and Reviews. London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1970.

———— Melincourt or Sir Oran Haut-Ton. London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd, 1896.

Pennant, Thomas. The Journey from Chester to London. London: Wilkie and Robinson, et al, 1811.

Phillips, D. Rhys. The History of the Vale of Neath. Swansea: by the author, 1925.

Phillips, John. Phillips' Inland Navigation: a reprint of A General History of Inland navigation, Foreign and Domestic; containing a Complete Account of the Canals already executed in England with Considerations on those Proposed. Newton Abbot, David & Charles, 1970.

Shaw, Rev. Stebbing. The History and Antiquities of Staffordshire. Wakefield, West Yorkshire: E. P. Publishing Ltd, 1976. Vol. I.

Smollett, Tobias. Humphrey Clinker. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971.

———— The Letters of Tobias Smollett. ed: Lewis M. Knapp. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970.

Southey, Robert. Journal of a Tour in Scotland in 1819. London: John Murray, 1929.

———— Letters from England. ed: Jack Simmons , London: The Cresset Press, 1951.

———— The Poetical Works of Robert Southey. London: Longman, Brown, Green, & Longmans, 1847.

Stock, N. W. Miss Weeton's Journal of a Governess. Newton Abbot: David and Charles Reprints, 1969.

Svedenstierna, Eric Thomas. Svedenstierna's Tour of Great Britain, 1802-3; The Travel Diary of an Industrial Spy . Trans: E. L. Dellow. Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1973.

Tatham, W. The Political Economy of Inland Navigation, Irrigation, and Drainage. London: Robert Faulder, 1799.

The Wynne Diaries 1789-1820. ed: Anne Fremantle. London: Oxford University Press, 1952.

Young, Arthur. Tours in England and Wales. London: London School of Economics and Political Science (University of London), 1932.

———— A Six Months Tour Through the North of England. London: W. Strahan etc., 1771.

SECONDARY REFERENCES

Adams, Percy G. Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel. Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1983.

Ashton, T. S. The Industrial Revolution 1760-1830. London: Oxford University Press, 1948.

Baldwin, Mark. Canal Books: A Guide to the Literature of the Waterways. London: M & M Baldwin, 1984.

Burton, Anthony. The Canal Builders. London: Eyre Methuen, 1972.

The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English, ed: Ian Ousby. London: Guild Publishing, 1988.

Canals — A New Look: Studies in Honour of Charles Hadfield. ed: Mark Baldwin and Anthony Burton. Chicester, Sussex: Phillimore & Co. Ltd, 1984.

Coleman, Terry. The Railway Navvies: A History of the Men who made the Railways. London: Hutchinson & Co, 1965.

Curley, Thomas M. Samuel Johnson and the Age of Travel. Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1976.

Dictionary of National Bibliography. Ed: Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee. London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1908. Vol II.

Dussinger, John A. '"The Glory of Motion": Carriages and Consciousness in the Early Novel.' Eighteenth-Century Fiction, I, No. 2, (Jan. 1989), 133-145.

Felton, Felix. Thomas Love Peacock. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973.

Gladwin, D. D. The Canals of Britain. London: B. T. Batsford Ltd, 1973.

Hadfield, Charles. The Canal Age. Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1968.

Hanson, Harry. Canal People. Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1978.

———— The Canal Boatmen, 1760-1914. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975.

Hobsbawn, Eric. The Pelican Economic History of Britain, Vol. 3, From 1750 to the Present Day; Industry and Empire. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975.

Horn, Pamela. Life and Labour in Rural England, 1760-1850. London: Macmillan Education Ltd, 1987.

Hoskins, W. G. The Making of the English Landscape. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1955.

Household, Humphrey. The Thames and Severn Canal. Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1969.

Klaus, Gustav. The Literature of Labour; Two hundred Year of Working Class Writing. Brighton, Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1985.

Lockwood, Allison. Passionate Pilgrims: The American Traveler in Great Britain, 1800-1914. New Jersey: Cornwall Books and Associated University Presses, 1981.

Madden, Lionel. Thomas Love Peacock. London: Evans Brothers Ltd, 1967.

Musson, A. E. and Eric Robinson. Science and Technology in the Industrial Revolution. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1969.

Priestley, J. B. Thomas Love Peacock. London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd, 1966.

Rogers, Pat. The Context of English Literature: The Eighteenth Century. New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, Inc, 1978.

Rolt, L. T. C. Thomas Telford. London; New York: Longmans, Green, 1958.

———— Navigable Waterways. London: Green & Co. Ltd, 1969.

Smiles, Samuel. The Life of Thomas Telford. London; John Murray, 1867.

———— Self-Help. London: John Murray, 1958.

Smith, Peter. Waterways Heritage. 2nd ed, Luton: Luton Museum and Art Gallery, 1972.

Stewart, J. I. M. Thomas Love Peacock. London: Longmans, Green & Co. Ltd, 1963.

Swain, R. W. A. "The Packet Boats." Waterways World, (June 1989), 65-67.

Trinder, Barrie. The Making of the Industrial Landscape. London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1982.

BALLAD SOURCES

Ashton, John. Modern Street Ballads. London: Chatto and Windus, 1888.

Faber Book of Ballads. ed: Matthew Hodgart. London: Faber and Faber, 1965.

Gerould, Gordon Hall. The Ballad of Tradition. New York: Oxford University Press, 1957.

Grigson, Geoffrey, (ed). The Penguin Book of Ballads. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975.

Harland, John. Ballads and Songs of Lancashire: Ancient and Modern Lancashire. 3rd ed. London: Whittaker, 1882.

Hindley, Charles. The Catnach Press: A Collection of the Books and Woodcuts of James Catnach, Late of Seven Dials,Printer. London: Reeves and Turner, 1869.

———— Curiosities of Street Literature. London: The Broadsheet King, 1966.

Hollingworth, Brian (ed). Songs of the People: Lancashire Dialect Poetry of the Industrial Revolution. Manchester: Mancheter University Press, 1977.

The Industrial Muse: The Industrial Revolution in English Poetry. ed: Jeremy Warburg. London: Oxford University Press, 1958.

Kennedy, Peter (ed). Folksongs of Britain and Ireland. London: Cassell and Company Ltd, 1975.

Later English Broadside Ballads. eds: John Holloway and Joan Black , Vol II, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979.

LLoyd, A. L. Come All Ye Bold Miners: Ballads and Songs of the Coalfields. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1978.

———— Folk Song in England. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1967.

Logan, W. H. A Pedlar's Pack of Ballads and Songs. Edinburgh: William Paterson, 1869.

Mackerness, E. D. A Social History of English Music. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964.

Neuburg, Victor E. Popular Literature: A History and Guide. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977.

Palmer, Roy. A Touch on the Times: Songs of Social Change, 1770-1914. Harmondsworth: Penguin Education, 1974.

———— A Ballad History of England from 1588 to the present Day. London: B. T. Batsford Ltd, 1979.

———— Strike the Bell: Transport by Road, Canal, Rail and Sea in the Nineteenth Century through Songs, Ballads and Contemporary Accounts. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978.

The Penguin Book of English Folk Songs. ed: R. Vaughan Williams and A.L. Lloyd. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959.

The Penguin Book of Everday Verse: Social and Documentary Poetry 1250-1916. ed: David Wright. London: Allen Lane, 1976.

Raven, Jon. The Urban and Industrial Songs of the Black Country and Birmingham. Wolverhampton: Broadside, 1977.

———— Canal Songs. Wolverhampton: Broadside Records, 1974.

Sharp, Cecil. Cecil Sharp's Collection of English Folk Songs. ed: Maud Karpeles , London: Oxford University Press, 1976.

Shepard, Leslie. The Broadside Ballad: A Study in Origins and Meaning. London: Herbert Jenkins, 1962.

———— The History of Street Literature. Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1973.

Vicinus, Martha . The Industrial Muse. London: Croom Helm, 1974.

———— Broadsides of the Industrial North. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Frank Graham, 1975.

Williams, Alfred, Folk Songs of the Upper Thames. London: Duckworth & Co., 1923.